

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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Editorial:

Lamont attacks
poor to save
his job 2

Decaying Britain

Decline of British
industry 3

Dismantling the
welfare state 4

NHS in crisis 5

Education, Crime,
Unemployment,
Racist Britain 6/7

Poisoning the
environment 8/9

British Rail off the
tracks 10

Malcolm X:

Review: Malcolm
X iconised 14

India:

Reign of terror 16

VICTORY TO THE TIMEX STRIKERS



The Budget— Lamont attacks poor to save his job

Norman Lamont had one overriding concern in preparing the last Budget of its kind on 16 March. He had to give the Tory party sufficient reason for keeping him in office.

Government economic policy, for some time, has been little more than doing whatever is expedient to stay in power. Lamont had to show that the longest recession since the war was over. And that the large fiscal and monetary stimulus given to the British economy, the former to win the Tories the last election, the latter after Britain was forced out of the ERM, would lead to economic recovery. And further that this hoped-for recovery would be sufficiently strong to absorb the massive tax increases, delayed until April 1995, which will be necessary to contain the growing and unsustainable government debt. In other words, he has to satisfy the financial markets without alienating Tory voters. That is why he has launched yet another attack on the living standards of large sections of the working class.

The Autumn Statement began the process by curbing government spending through a pay cut imposed on millions of public sector workers (see *FRFI* 110). The Budget continued with attacks on the living standards of the poorer sections of the working class. Substantial government revenues will be raised by extending VAT to domestic fuel, a regressive tax which has a disproportionate effect on the poor, the unemployed, the low paid and the state pensioners.

Principles... what principles?

Monetary discipline, balanced budgets, tax cuts and a strong pound have all been jettisoned in obedience to the Tory party's determination to stay in power.

Last September, a few days after Lamont and Major had told us 'there was going to be no devaluation, no realignment' of the pound, Britain came out of the ERM, the pound was devalued and interest rates were cut. By time of the budget, the pound had been devalued by some 17% and interest rates cut by 4%, giving the British economy the biggest monetary stimulus since the war.

The party which claimed to be able to balance the budget over the economic cycle has overseen the most expansive fiscal policy since the mid-1970s, much of this necessary because of the prolonged recession.

Public spending (excluding privatisation receipts) in 1992/3 reached 44.75% of GDP, above the level of 44% of GDP when the Tories first took office in 1979/80. It is predicted to rise to 45.5% in 1993/4 only falling below the level of 1979/80 in 1996/7. Any breach of the government-imposed pay norm for public sector workers, or faster growth of unemployment should expected growth rates not be achieved, will ensure that these predictions are significant underestimates.

The Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (PSBR – the gap between government expenditure

and revenues), even after the massive tax increases in this budget, will grow from £35bn in 1992/3, 5.75% of GDP, to £50bn, 8% of GDP, in 1993/4. Thereafter, on the optimistic assumption of an average annual growth rate of 2.5%, it is predicted to fall to £30bn in 1997/8, 3.75% of GDP, still above the 3% level required by the Maastricht Treaty



on 1 January 1994. As a result by 1998 the gross public sector debt will have more than doubled since 1990, to over 50% of GDP. Interest on the national debt will rise from £17.5bn in 1992/3 to £29.5bn in 1997/8, 8.6% of total government spending. Lamont's budget speech claim to have a 'clear medium term strategy to bring the borrowing requirement back towards balance' cannot be taken seriously.

'We have no plans and no need to raise extra resources from Value Added Tax... we do not see any need to increase the tax burden', stated John Major in March 1992, after having already said earlier in January that he had no plans to raise the level of National Insurance Contributions. That was all before the election. This budget simply brushed aside such 'principles' when Lamont announced a 'wedge' of steadily rising revenues to be raised from taxation: £500m in 1993/4, £6.5bn in 1994/5 and a massive £10.5bn in 1995/6, equivalent to some 1.5% of GDP.

Under the Tories the average level of taxation has increased despite the large reduction of taxation on businesses and the incomes of the rich and the highly-paid. The Tories have achieved this primarily by increasing National Insurance and VAT by more than the reduction in income tax. This budget will ensure a further rapid rise in the overall tax burden from 34.5% of GDP in 1993/4 to 37% of GDP in 1997/8.

Again the rise will hit the less well off disproportionately. The increase of National Insurance by 1% from April 1994 is, in reality, just another form of income tax, but a more regressive one because the cut off point means that it is not paid on income above £420 a week.

The extension of VAT to domestic fuel and heating is even more regressive. VAT will increase the cost of domestic fuel by 8 per cent in 1994/5 and by 17.5 per cent in 1995/6. It will hit the lowest income families more than three times as hard as

the better off. The richest fifth spend in the region of 3 per cent of their incomes on fuel, the average family spends 4.7 per cent, while the low paid, pensioners and the poor pay between 11% and 13%. Many of those already on subsistence level state benefits will be forced to choose between eating and keeping warm. While the public

outcry against this vicious attack on the poorest sections of the working class has forced the government to promise some kind of compensation payments in the Autumn, we can be sure that, unless there is an organised fightback by those most affected, those payments will be totally inadequate. In any case, this compensation does not help the millions of low-paid workers who will receive nothing.

Further, the announced increase in excise duties on cigarettes and beer is yet another case of regressive taxation which disproportionately affects the working class, particularly the low paid.

Finally while the budget reduced the tax burden on business by about £1bn, Lamont offered an insulting £230m (net cost of £125m) to force 100,000 long term unemployed into 'workfare' type schemes. And his much heralded subsidy to employers – £60 a week – to take on some of those unemployed for two years or more will almost certainly be used by employers as a subsidy for people they would have employed anyway.

Turbulent years ahead

In an interesting article in the *Financial Times* (18 March 1993) Samuel Brittan examined the possible consequences of a growth rate 0.5% lower than that projected in the budget analysis. He showed that the PSBR would still be 5.25% of GDP in 1997/8, a level that the financial markets would almost certainly regard as unsustainable. He asks what are the policy implications. To let it run to stimulate a slack economy or apply 'ferocious cuts in spending and tax increases to reduce the budget deficit to a sustainable rate?' Lamont's budget speech makes the Tories' answer quite clear.

Lamont argues that in the early 1980s the Tories took steps to bring public finances under control, turning a public sector deficit of 5% into a surplus of 3%.

'We did not shrink from the necessary changes then and I will not shrink from making them today'. In the absence of the high revenues from North Sea Oil which the government had in the early 1980s; with privatisation receipts tapering off; and with a Chancellor committed to continue with 'the lowest rate of tax on business profits in the industrialised world... and a personal tax system which makes it attractive for entrepreneurs and managers to live and work in Britain' (Budget speech), we can expect further savage attacks on the welfare state and public sector pay. This will be accompanied by increased taxation specifically aimed at the working class.

Unemployment is predicted to rise until 1995 whatever happens. Social services are rapidly deteriorating and social security benefits are already at levels sufficient only to maintain increasing numbers of people at poverty levels of subsistence. In this context, sustained attack on the welfare state and working class living standards will rapidly lead to the renewal of the class struggle in Britain. There are turbulent years ahead.

MAXINE WILLIAMS

The miners have voted for a one day strike on 2 April to protest against government plans to destroy the mining industry and with it their jobs and communities. This protest goes alongside the many protests and the Women Against Pit Closures Camps which the mining communities have spearheaded since the closures were announced. Despite overwhelming public support for the miners struggle against unemployment, the Labour and TUC leaderships have done virtually nothing to keep this issue centre stage. No doubt they are as fearful of effective working class protest as are the Tories. Aside from token support for national marches the TUC has concentrated on trying to build alliances with em-



Burnsall strikers join the Women Against Pit Closures camp at Markham Main

Rally to the miners

ployers in manufacturing industry. On 2 April, the day of the miners' strike, the TUC contribution is to take a delegation as far away as possible – to lobby the European Community – about jobs. As for John Smith – well, the Invisible Man had a higher profile.

On a recent television programme, Arthur Scargill made plain his view that the 1984/85 strike was defeated because of lack of support from the Labour and Trade Union leadership. Today once again the miners have had to go over the heads of these leaders to call for support and have asked for backing from trade unionists on 2 April.

Meanwhile the press has carried stories, no doubt leaked by the government to soften up public opinion for the decision ahead, that indicate Heseltine's plan to go ahead with all pit closures except two.

This is the response to the Trade and Industry Select Committee view that 15 pits could be kept open. Forced after the original announcement to back off from immediate closure by the ferocity of public outcry, the government's plan has always been to isolate the miners in order to defeat them. Heseltine's particular concern is to persuade the Tory backbenchers who threatened to vote against closures, that there is no alternative.

The miners' struggle is a political fight. They know this and have worked to mobilise both trade unionists and the wider public to fight the closures. If the protests are wide-scale enough pits will be saved. That is why today it is the Labour and Trade Union leadership's determination to demobilise public protest that poses the greatest threat to the miners.

Timex strikers fight on

KAREN TAYLOR AND MICK TAYLOR

The Timex workers in Dundee are fighting back against a management which has sacked all shop floor workers and has advertised locally for scab labour in an effort to break union organisation, the AEEU, in the factory. This came after the workers had resisted management lay offs which included most of the shop stewards and a pay freeze and cuts in pension and other benefits.

Since February the workers, the majority women, have made a determined stand against the multinational's attempt to impose its exploitative conditions. They have not been intimidated by the threat of unemployment

and have stood firm. Pickets have continued round the clock for the past two months despite snow and showers of papers from the management seeking to outlaw the demonstrations. In true Wapping style, management installed a security fence and video cameras. Nevertheless over 200 join the picket each day.

On International Womens Day, 8 March, the daily pickets were joined by Parkside Women's Pit Camp and women strikers from Middlebrook Mushrooms. Scabs were given a verbal pasting and an impromptu march set off through the industrial estate to a meeting at Loches Library. Speakers included Timex women, Revolutionary Communist Group, Parkside Womens Pit Camp, Middlebrook Mushrooms

and the CPGB/Daily Worker. The RCG speaker, Karen, spoke about women taking the lead in struggles and urged the Timex strikers to have no faith in the Scottish TUC with its record of winning nothing and leading nothing.

The Timex management tried to intimidate the strikers with a court injunction to prevent pickets but lost its action, with costs awarded to the union. Alongside these threats of fines or prison the police have arrested some picketers.

The RCG sends solidarity to the strikers and will work within a Support Group to build the broadest support for them. Donations and messages to: Timex Strike, AEEU Office, 2 Union Street, Dundee, Scotland.

MADE IN BRITAIN

In 1992 output of all production industries – including manufacture, energy and water – fell for the third year running, the first time this has happened since the early 1930s. As if some belated dawn of recognition had struck the government's brain, John Major declared that '... services aren't enough because services in a recession are the first thing you cut, so we need the manufacturing base both as import substitution and as part of the continuing export drive'. TREVOR RAYNE examines the decline of British manufacture.

Manufacture is now presented as the key to solving the British economy's problems of persistent trade deficits, soaring public sector debt and unemployment. To reverse the decline of British manufacture would require halting the decay of British capitalism. This is impossible without an unprecedented assault on living conditions for millions of people in Britain and around the world, combined with a shift in the balance of forces between competing capitalist blocs.

It was fashionable among Tory ideologues and their economic theorists during the 1970s to claim that the distinction between income derived from manufacture and income derived from services was irrelevant; what mattered was that goods and services be sold on the market. A dwindling manufacture was viewed as acceptable for as long as services expanded and were profitable and North Sea oil was there to top up the balance. An expansion of banking, insurance and financial services during the Thatcher years was accompanied by intonements to a 'leaner and fitter' industry.

Between 1979-92 over 2.5 million manufacturing jobs have been cut out of the British economy. At the end of 1992 manufacturing employment stood at 4.59 million or 18 per cent of the workforce in employment. In 1978 7.3 million of the workforce were employed in manufacture, 32 per cent of the total. At the end of 1992, Britain's manufacturing output was about 1 per cent higher than it was in 1973. Over the period 1970-90 Britain's manufacturing capacity has grown by 19 per cent, that of Germany, France and Italy by 43 per cent, the USA's by 86 per cent and Japan's by 129 per cent. At the end of the Second World War, Britain sold 25 per cent of the world's manufactured exports; today the figure is less than 9 per cent.

This relative decline in manufacturing performance has produced an intractable balance of payments problem. The trade in physical goods, the visible trade, has been in deficit since 1983. The current account, which combines the visible balance with the invisible balance in services, has been in deficit since 1987. The situation is deteriorating. With a presumed 'crisis of confidence' in the population supposedly depressing

demand, Britain recorded record levels of imports for December and January of £5.44bn and £5.31bn respectively. Britain's visible balance for 1992 was in deficit by £13.77bn. The trade in services was in surplus by £3.73bn, but the final quarter of 1992 produced the lowest surplus in this sector for 11 years, of £594m. With Britain's physical output of oil falling by 28 per cent since 1986, earnings from services combined with those from investments overseas, which yielded a £3.2bn surplus for 1992, are insufficient to cover the huge deficit in traded goods.

Imports are rising in almost every sector of visible trade: iron and steel up 50 per cent since 1985; electrical goods up 100 per cent over the same period; clothing and footwear likewise doubled; plastics up 5 per cent since 1990; scientific instruments up 8 per cent since 1990. As one merchant banker remarked on the feeble hopes that sterling's devaluation might revive British capital's competitiveness: if Britain 'does not produce motor cycles, vacuum cleaners and fridges in the first place, simply chopping 15 per cent off the exchange rate is not going to solve the problem'.

Seldom have a British government or indeed capitalism's theoreticians been so bereft of ideas or inkling. In so far as the government has a strategy towards the EC and Maastricht, it is to attempt to draw overseas investment into Britain by cheap labour and thereby facilitate custom free exports into the single market. Since 1987 about one-fifth of the £220bn invested in British industry has come from abroad. In his budget speech Lamont boasted, 'we have attracted no less than a third of all foreign investment into the EC over the last few years'. British capital hopes to revive itself by sharing its labour with particularly Japanese and US capital.

Reviving profitability

Capitalists do not invest to revive manufacture, to solve trade imbalances or to reduce unemployment; they invest to make a profit. Currently, the average rate of return on investment in Britain is about 7.3 per cent and has been thereabouts since early 1991. This is approximately half the return on investment in Germany and the USA and a quarter of what can be squeezed out of the Third World. 7.3 per cent is insufficient to revive much

interest in investing in British manufacture.

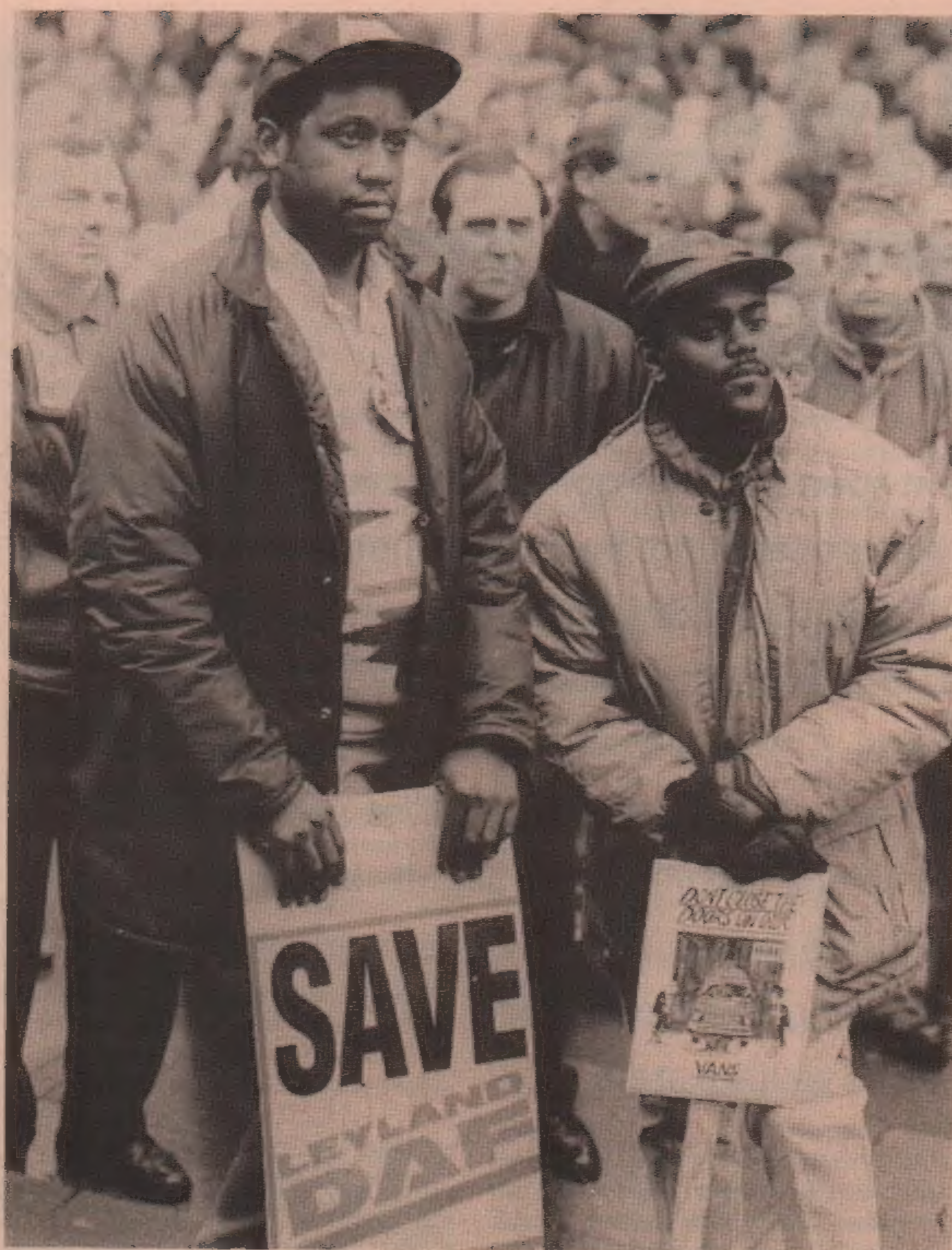
British capital, using the British state, must resort to the customary ways of raising the rate of profit through the extraction of more surplus value from labour. Each of the following can be seen in more extensive use in Britain today, and they will be reinforced with a vengeance. The length of the working day can be extended; the work rate can be speeded up; the amount of time necessary to make a product can be reduced, resulting in a greater number of goods

It intends to provide multinational capital with a cheap, malleable and unprotected workforce to draw investment back into Britain.

made during the working day. New machinery and changes in the organisation of the workforce are integral to these processes which drive down the costs of labour. At the same time the demand for labour falls as the pursuit of surplus value intensifies and a huge reserve army of unemployed is disgorged by capital, available to be deployed to discipline and further reduce the cost of the workforce. Currently, the 24 countries of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, developed capitalist economies, are estimated to have 34 million unemployed and double that amount classified as 'economically inactive', that is, no jobs, but given up searching.

Together with the above methods of raising the rate of profit, capital concentrates into huge monopolies which are able to manipulate prices and control cheap resources and markets around the globe. This they do in competition with each other for 'spheres of influence'.

These are the real solutions that capital seeks to use for its problems of accumulation, not the innocently labelled 'investment in training', 'tax allowances on capital', 'work-fare'. If Major and Lamont do not have a clue, capital will attempt to survive on its instinct and attack labour.



Monopolies

'Britain is an island dominated by big corporations, growing bigger: with a small circle of corporate chiefs at the top.' (Anthony Sampson, *The Essential Anatomy of Britain*).

Of the *Financial Times*' 'European 500' top companies ranked by market capitalisation value (that is, assets and share value), of the ten biggest three are British and two are Anglo-Dutch. Twenty five of the top 50 are British and Anglo-Dutch companies. While the British economy lags behind, the transnational monopolies concentrate through mergers and takeovers at home and overseas and take leading global positions. The top 13 British companies in the FT list shed approximately 70,000 jobs in 1992. None of those 13 are primarily manufacturing firms, if pharmaceuticals are excluded. Britain's biggest manufacturer and exporter of manufactured goods, British Aerospace, came 464th on the list.

In February, British Aerospace announced the largest ever loss by a British company of £1.2bn. Its workforce of 134,000 in 1991 was cut to 123,000 in 1992 and a further 10,000 jobs are to go this year. The only profitable sector of British Aerospace's operations apart from 'construction and other' is weapons sales. Britain has a trading deficit in goods with every region of the world except for the oil exporting countries, to whom British capital sells weapons.

Intensification

The motor industry is traditionally seen as the barometer of Britain's manufacturing performance. Foreign trade in cars went into the red in 1982 and the deficit rose to a record £6.6bn in 1989, 28 per cent of the visible trade deficit. In 1991 Britain received 38.2 per cent of Japanese investment into Europe, \$3.6bn. So far £2.1bn has been invested by Nissan, Toyota and Honda in car manufacture in Britain. The chairperson of Peugeot described Britain as 'a Japanese aircraft carrier', leading the assault on European car makers. By the end of the 1990s, the 'British' car industry is expected to be a third Japanese, a third US and a third European.

However, looking to Japan to haul British manufacture back to its feet is a delusion. When a Japanese car is sold out of Britain up to 70-80 per cent of the components were im-

ported, diminishing the value added here in Britain. Further, since 1991 Japanese overseas investment has fallen by 39 per cent as it moves into Asian markets and the Japanese domestic economy slides towards a stock market and banking crisis with corporate profits down nearly 40 per cent in the last quarter of 1992.

Significantly Japanese working practices show something of what is in store for workers in Britain. In 1982, 315,000 car workers made 1.16 million vehicles. In 1991 216,000 workers made 1.45 million vehicles. Throughout the car industry there are speed-ups of production lines, cuts in break times, and the increased use of temporary and part-time contracts. Japanese car factories organise the workforce into teams which break down job demarcation lines. The concept of the 'flexible' worker is a worker whose job description encompasses what were two or three people's jobs. Teams are competitive units that both accelerate the rate of production and serve as a management surveillance device over the workforce. It is noteworthy that the percentage of days lost through absenteeism each year in a Japanese factory in Britain is 2.35 per cent while that for domestically owned firms is on average 3.9 per cent. The Japanese company workforce in Britain is a largely deunionised force.

In the context of massive and growing unemployment, employers will turn increasingly to deunionised labour. Toyota has a management philosophy of the 'total production system' where employees 'share responsibilities'. Twenty thousand applications were processed for 400 jobs on production 'teams' at the Derbyshire plant. Applicants had to pass a series of tests for 'commitment'. The 400 successful applicants were rewarded with £13,000 a year for a 39-hour week. With the scale of competition for jobs among unemployed workers combined with the weakness of existing trade union organisations even the skilled in the most productive factories in Europe will be forced to take pay cuts!

Wherever you look the same problems arise. Britain now has the fourth largest electronics industry in the world. Of the 16 members of the trade association for consumer electronic firms just one is British-owned. The rest are primarily Japanese and US, importing components. Britain has two of the top six pharmaceutical companies. In 1992 Glaxo invested £72m in Britain and £124m abroad. For four successive years Glaxo has invested more overseas than in Britain. 'It just does not make sense manufacturing bulk chemicals in the UK anymore', according to ICI's Chief Operating Officer. From 1981 to 1991 ICI's investment in Britain was £3.5bn, overseas it was £7.6bn.

Having significantly weakened the trade unions in the 1980s by legislation and unemployment, the government does not now intend to grant workers in Britain the rights and conditions proposed in the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty. It intends to provide multinational capital with a cheap, malleable and unprotected workforce to draw investment back into Britain.

The Labour Party says that investment in manufacture is a way to create jobs and reduce unemployment. This is nonsense. Capital requires prospects of a sufficient profit before it invests. In the context of the international competition among capitals this requires that the productivity of labour in Britain be raised and raised again in order to restore the rate of profit. The result would be an overall loss of jobs, not a gain. Mass unemployment, low wages and an intensified work regime are what a declining British capitalism has in store for workers in Britain. ■

This article will be discussed by North London FFI on Tuesday 20 April, 7.30pm. Above The Neighbourhood Centre, Greenland Road, London NW1 (2 mins walk from Camden Town tube). All welcome.

ENDING WELFARE

With one third of government spending now going on social security (£80bn) and recession showing no signs of abating, the government has embarked on a renewed crusade to cut public spending. The long-term review of social policy spending announced in February by Michael Portillo, extends a process already long underway. Armed with the standard rhetoric about the collapse of family values and poverty being the fault of the poor, the aim of this exercise, readily lapped up and modified only slightly by the Labour shadows, is to destroy the hitherto sacrosanct idea of universal benefits and replace it with the idea of 'targeting' the most needy. NICKI JAMESON examines the dismantling of the welfare state.

Below the surface of 'targeting the needy' is the creation of a 'safety-net' - a complete two-tier society, the United States version of 'welfare' - tiny hand-outs available to the poorest section to keep them from starvation or rebellion. And also hidden, but becoming more overt by the day in measures such as the Child Support Act, which comes into force on 5 April, and the mooted 'workfare' schemes is the element of coercion on the poor to co-operate, conform and be policed in return for these meagre payments. Capitalism can no longer sustain the welfare state and is preparing the ground for its total destruction. It is a process which will take a number of years but which is already underway and must be opposed at every stage.

What is poverty?

No matter which statistics and definitions you use - and the government in this country, unlike most others, refuses to define an official poverty line - 11-12 million people in Britain live in poverty; that is one fifth of the population. Amongst children the proportion is even higher with a quarter living in poverty. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), in its study *Poverty - the facts*, has gone to great lengths to define poverty. It compares two 'poverty lines' - one based on the level of income support: in 1989 20% of the population lived on or below (8%) the level of income support as opposed to 14% in 1979; the other calculated by taking half the national average income minus housing costs: by this method 22% lived in poverty in 1989 as opposed to only 9% in 1979. Either way the figure is about 11-12 million people and either way it is still an underestimate as all surveys and statistics exclude the very poorest: those who are in institutions or prison or are homeless.

So what is the truth of Thatcher's 1988 outburst 'Everyone in the nation has benefited from increased prosperity - everyone.'? The truth is that while average real disposable income has risen 30% over the ten years 1979-89, the disparity between the richest and poorest sections has widened significantly with the income of the poorest tenth falling 6% in real terms in strong contrast to the top tenth which rose 46%.

Who are the poor?

20% of those in poverty are unemployed; 35% are couples with children; 30% are pensioners. In 1989 76% of children in lone parent fami-

lies were living in poverty compared to 13% of children in two-parent families. The group among which poverty has risen most over the 10 years 1979-89 is single people without children; this is due to rising unemployment and changes in benefit laws and levels. Large families are particularly prone to poverty if they depend on a single breadwinner and that person becomes unemployed.

Women are more likely to live in

'I'm closing down the something-for-nothing society.'
Peter Lilley,
Secretary of State for Social Security.

poverty than men; according to CPAG 5.1 million women live in poverty as opposed to 3.4 million men. Women make up two thirds of old age pensioners but are less likely to have contributed sufficient national insurance to receive a state pension or have one from employment and are therefore more likely to be on income support; nine out of ten lone parents are women; in employment women are far more likely to be low-paid and in temporary or part time work without benefits such as holiday and sick pay.

Black people are more likely to be poor than white people. A study by Amin and Leech in 1988 concluded that: 'In spite of government concern with racial disadvantage, and equal opportunities in helping to create a black middle class, the condition of the black poor is deteriorating.' This is due partly to entrenched racial discrimination which increases the risk of unemployment or low pay and partly to immigration policies which exclude many black people from access to welfare benefits. Other factors such as family size also play a role.

The Child Support Act

Introduced under the guise of making wealthy errant fathers pay maintenance for their children and standardising the amounts of maintenance, the Child Support Agency is invested with sweeping powers both to investigate absent fathers and to interrogate and demand information from lone mothers. Contrary to the publicity, the main beneficiary will not be estranged mothers but the Treasury. The Agency's role in chasing

partners of waged mothers will be secondary to its role in investigating the partners of lone parents on income support. In fact women not on income support will have to pay the Agency to work for them. Women on benefit are now obliged by law to name the fathers of their children so that maintenance payments can be obtained from them. These payments will go to the government, not the mother, and failure to comply by naming the father will result in 'punishment' of a 20% deduction in Income Support for six months followed by £4.40 for another year. There is a clause allowing women to withhold information if contact with the father will cause 'harm or undue stress', but this is of course open to many subjective interpretations and the burden of proof is on the woman concerned while the Child Support officer is in the powerful position of deciding whether her claim is 'plausible' or not.

Taking the attack on women's right to run their own lives to a degree which is both ludicrous and terrifying, women who have become pregnant by artificial insemination by private arrangement, rather than through a recognised clinic (and the clinics are only allowed to treat married women) will be asked to name the sperm donor who will be considered an absent parent.

If the Child Support Act affects you:

- You have a legal right not to fill in the maintenance authorisation form and your Income Support can not be withheld because you do not complete it. However £8.80 can be deducted for six months and £4.40 for another year. After that they must resume paying you full benefit.
- They have no right to pursue the father if you don't fill in the authorisation form. If they do so anyway and it results in 'harm or undue distress' you may be able to sue them for damages.
- They have no right to deduct £8.80 if you don't know who the father is or he is abroad. There's no way they can disprove a statement to this effect, so stick to your guns!
- Child Support officers may ask your relatives, friends or neighbours for information. They are not supposed to question your children.

For further advice and information contact the Campaign Against the Child Support Act, PO Box 287, London NW6 5QU 071 837 7509; Box 14, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW 061 344 0758 or PO Box 196, Bristol BS99 0272 426608



'Workfare' by any other name

Since 1979 32 changes have been made to the way unemployment statistics are measured. All but one has reduced the total. Yet unemployment is still, even by official figures, around three million. In that period of time we have seen 'voluntary' Manpower, YOPS, ET and YT schemes, paying low wages or dole plus £10 together with compulsory Restart interviews and Job Clubs. The 'voluntary' element was debatable with some people forced to go on schemes or lose benefit and, ironically, others who had volunteered to go on them, unable to find places. The emphasis was always on 'training' but after the training, there were no jobs. Now, whether the 'workfare' that John Major is mulling over, becomes a reality or not, we have Job-plan Workshop which requires anyone unemployed for a year or more to go on a one-week course to 'assess their strengths and skills and prepare a personal action plan'. If the claimant refuses to attend they lose 40% of their benefit. Ironically, whilst eschewing the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty, the Department of Employment has applied to the European Social Fund for millions of pounds both for this scheme and for the extension of Restart.

Labour too has its 'workfarists': David Blunkett, growing more reactionary by the day, has called for nine months compulsory labour for all young people and Labour peer, Lord Plant, writes in praise of work for dole schemes in his Fabian pamphlet *Social Justice, Labour and the New Right*. The Clinton catch phrase 'tough love' which means locking up young offenders in secure units when talking about crime, turns up in this context to justify the element of coercion, which Blunkett has refused to rule out. Sarah Baxter of the *New Statesman* writes in glowing terms of Plant and Blunkett's ideas, seeing workfare through a misty-eyed veil, as the road to a socialist Utopia involving cheap transport and freely available child care. A strange progression, indeed! As has always been the case, the rich are forcing the poor to humble themselves, to work for low or no wages, to learn meaningless and unusable 'skills' for their own good. What is more, such schemes force down the wage levels of other workers and help towards the creation of a low-wage economy.

The March budget, predictably, did not go all out to create a compulsory workfare scheme. Despite the Blunketts, Plants and Baxters, the

idea is still too politically unpopular on both sides of the house and among the public. Instead, more subtly, a plan was introduced which could at a future date provide the infrastructure for a compulsory scheme. A new Community Action programme will provide 60,000 places for people unemployed for more than a year to do community work. They will be paid, yet again, at their benefit level plus £10.

Indirect loss of benefit

While people on income support are still entitled to full rent rebate, free school meals, milk tokens, free prescriptions and legal aid, those on low incomes are not and the rising charges for prescriptions, school meals and other services hit them hardest.

The newly announced VAT on fuel bills will hit the poor severely; already the cases are legion of old people dying of hypothermia because they cannot afford to heat their homes in winter. The increased cost of electricity and gas can only make this situation even more dire. Not only the elderly will suffer but all groups who spend a lot of time in their homes: the disabled, the unemployed and families with children. The proportion of weekly income spent on fuel by the poorest fifth of households is already double that spent by the average household. The vague promise that increased fuel costs will be 'taken into account' when means-tested benefits are increased is little comfort.

Fighting back!

Only organised working class action in the community can begin to fight back against this prevalent culture where the poor are held responsible for their fate but deprived of the means of doing anything about it. On some big council estates tenants are setting up their own credit unions to escape mounting debt and avoid both loan sharks and the Social Fund trap. These initiatives are led by women. As local councils withdraw funding for services this kind of self-organisation is spreading into the organisation of youth clubs and playgroups; in the future it may have to encompass libraries and schools. In an otherwise gloomy picture, such new seeds of working class organisation are the start of a way forward to resist spiralling poverty and defend working class communities. ■

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IN POOR HEALTH

The crisis of the NHS is front-page news. Here ANNA CORALLY, a junior doctor, explains why.

The NHS is being dismantled. The British state is no longer able to provide a universal health care system which services the whole population. In 1993, free medical treatment exists in an increasingly dilapidated and inadequate service. Better off people will be able to afford medical treatment, whilst the poor and especially the old, the mentally ill, the chronically sick and the 'unproductive' members of society will suffer increasing neglect.

The NHS is being fragmented as a prelude to demolition. None of the changes are based on long-term planning for the health care of the whole population. The aim of the 1990 White Paper which introduced the 'internal market' into the NHS was to progressively cheapen the costs of providing health care. The necessary consequence of this is the development of a two-tier service.

The internal market

This internal market which has been introduced into the NHS creates a division between 'purchasers' and 'providers'. A 'purchaser' is either the District Health Authority (DHA), formerly managers of the hospitals, or, increasingly, GP fundholders (GPFH). 'Providers' are hospitals, which by April 1994 will almost in their entirety (95%) have 'opted out' of DHA control.

Such 'providers', whether 'opted out' or not, get their money by competing for contracts to treat patients from the DHA or GPFH.

GP fundholders have discretion over when and where they send patients for non-emergency treatment. They, along with District Health Authorities can play off one hospital against another to obtain the cheapest treatment. Non-fundholding GPs are essentially bound by the contracts that the DHA negotiates and only under exceptional circumstances will they be able to send patients to a hospital where the DHA has no contract.

The major advantage of being a GP fundholder is the ability to play the market. As cash becomes tighter and tighter, 'providers' are fulfilling their DHA contracts earlier in the financial year. The only way that they can cover their budgets is by then offering preferential treatment to GP fundholders, where the extra needed cash supposedly accompanies the patient.

However, even during the rest of the year there is increasingly pressure to service GPFH patients. 'Providers' are more and more targeting GP fundholding activity to be done earlier in the financial year, so that they can get the cash as quickly as possible. Although Virginia Bottomley argues that in order to avoid treatment being delayed towards the end of the financial year due to lack of money, hospitals must 'spread the load over the financial year', market ideology does not allow for this. While rationing of health care was formerly operated by waiting lists where everyone waited their turn, now some people can jump the queue.

Even at its inception in 1948, the NHS was underfunded. The first year's costs were estimated at £179m when £400m was actually required. Now in the midst of long term decline and deepening recession, British capital is even less willing to pay the costs of health care. The Tories are treading a fine line, whereby in their destruction of universal health care, they must retain sufficient services to satisfy the middle classes and thus avoid substantial social and political opposition.

GP fundholders are the mechanism by which this can happen. To become fund-holding, GPs must have a minimum of 11,000 people on their books. GPFHs enter a competitive market, they benefit from having good practice premises and ancillary staff, and need practice managers, fund managers, accountants etc. Therefore the biggest losers amongst GPs will be the small single or double handed practices in inner cities. It follows

that the biggest losers amongst patients will be the working class.

In more affluent areas, people will be healthier and will make less demand on chronic services. Also, in middle class practices, a higher proportion of patients will have insurance and can therefore be sent anywhere.

Those in most need of services, for example the disabled, the mentally ill and the old, are disproportionately represented amongst the poor and in inner cities, with the added burden on health from inadequate living and working conditions and nutrition. They suffer from increased physical difficulties and will be increasingly underprovided for.

The Tomlinson Report

The Tomlinson Report on London's health care provision is based on a doubly false premise. First, that an increase in community services will automatically decrease the need for acute hospital beds, and second that there will be an increase in community services. It is too soon to forget that between 1984 and 1990, 51% of long stay psychiatric hospital beds (7,273 beds) were closed with no alternative provisions made. The result is that thousands of people have ended up living on the streets or in temporary accommodation.

The sums of money proposed by the government for this supposed increase in community services are not even sufficient to cover the estimated costs of refurbishing the GP practices in London that fall below the minimum standards as set out in the Tomlinson Report. But ministers are arguing that community, primary and preventative care will decrease the need for hospital care. The inadequacies of the primary care system in this country are not being addressed and will not be altered by destroying the hospital system. Similar plans to those outlined in the Tomlinson Report are being put into practice in other cities. For example in Liverpool, where the merging of the Accident and Emergency Departments herald the closure of hospitals.

Symptoms and signs of demise

The NHS is now a fragmented health service with region set against region, district against district, GP practice against GP practice, and within hospitals themselves, as each ward, laboratory and service begins to run its own budget, unit against unit. Hospitals that have opted out are trying to keep their business financially viable, and those that are looking to become Trusts need to make themselves financially attractive.

As a health worker in a hospital which is becoming a trust on 1 April, I see the signs of collapse everywhere. Charitable contributions are becoming more and more important for essential ward equipment, often coming directly out of the pockets of patients or their relatives. There is a constant bed crisis but more beds are closed and yet more blocked by people who cannot go home because of non-medical reasons, a situation which is likely to get worse with the advent of the Community Care Act coming into place on 1 April.

It is common practice for senior sisters and charge nurses to give out dinners. It is common for an acute medical ward with 28 patients to be staffed by three or four nurses, of which one or two may be staff nurses, one an auxiliary and one a student. Proposals aimed at increasing the staffing levels will reduce the skill mix, by employing more health care assistants who, while playing an invaluable role in the team of staff, are not medically qualified.

Due to bed closures there are no longer facilities for day case investigation or surgery. One day a week the day room on one of the wards is used with makeshift partitions to ensure that some people are taken off the waiting list. This means

removing a nurse from the ward to supervise the day room.

£500 was allocated for a year's worth of special investigations that the laboratory on site was no longer allowed to perform due to its budget. The cheapest laboratory service elsewhere had to be found. Even with restrictions imposed on such investigations, the bill by the end of the third quarter was £2,000.

The hospital cannot be closed to admissions until there are no beds unoccupied. In order to free beds for medical emergencies, therefore, patients are transferred out to surgical wards, often in the middle of the night. They then occupy a bed that would have served for an admission for an operation the following day: another person is cancelled. 50,000 operations were cancelled in 1991 in the NHS.

There are no longer two beds reserved for multiple injuries and trauma cases. While the new managers' suite is estimated to have cost £25,000, the intensive care unit does not have essential equipment. It has been publicly stated in the hospital news bulletin that patients will be encouraged to go private within the hospital to fund the NHS patients.

The consequences

New areas of management are creating a layer of people who profit out of the NHS, parasites who benefit from making the reforms work: directorate managers and assistants; financial, contract, marketing and project managers; external market managers; computer companies and so on. Approximately twenty to thirty posts are being formed in hospitals while GP fundholders are taking on practice managers, fund managers, accountants etc. All these posts start at £20,000 and some go up to £90,000 pa. There is an ongoing scandalous waste of public money. Consultants have always had a parasitical relationship with the NHS, requiring their NHS work to obtain their private practice (earning them hundreds of thousands of pounds on top of their NHS salary of up to £96,000 pa). Some consultants are now taking on jobs as clinical directors. The British Medical Association's response to the crisis in the NHS has partly consisted of appeasing anxious consultants who fear the possibility of redundancy.

Contracting out hospital domestic and catering services to firms who need to make a profit means growing exploitation of workers with lower wages and worse conditions. If hospitals cannot recover their money (eg from GP fundholders), they will carry a deficit over into the next financial year. Since 70% of costs in the NHS are staff salaries, staff will be cut. These cuts will come from the lower-paid workers.

While the employment benefits of the NHS reforms are reaped by the middle classes (there are more jobs for university-educated people in today's NHS than ever before), the job losses are affecting the working class. If they do not lose their jobs, they will take a decrease in pay and have fewer rights. Under the NHS reforms, poor people, black people, working class people will suffer both from a cut in services and a cut in jobs.

The fightback can only come from the working class. Single issue campaigns buy time for small parts of the system; the unions are not organised to oppose the reforms; the general attitude is to accept the changes and fight for small corners or short term reprieves.

Until the market-style NHS, Trust status hospitals and GP fundholders are opposed, the process of attrition will continue and the working class will bear the brunt of the reforms. ■

This article will be discussed by North London FRFI Discussion Group on Tuesday 30 March, 7.30pm: **Crisis in the National Health Service: a health worker speaks out**, above The Neighbourhood Centre, Greenland Road, London NW1 (2 mins walk from Camden Town tube). All welcome.

■ The ambulance services are under intolerable workload pressure. £1.5m was spent on a computerised call-out system last year in the London Ambulance service. The system's failure resulted in 20 deaths.

■ Recently highlighted in the press was the case of Bert Lambert who died of a heart attack. He had been told in January that he could not be seen before April for the investigations and operative procedures he needed for his heart disease. For an increasing number of people, cancellation and delay in treatment will mean death.

■ Wessex Regional Health Service (RHS) wasted at least £20m on useless computer projects out of £42m for a 'regional information systems plan' (RISP). Those responsible for the RISP employed a private company to deal with the region's computing services. This company was formed and staff by ex-Wessex RHS employees.

■ Wrightington Hospital near Wigan is taking on five new managers (£30,000 each plus Cavalier) while simultaneously cutting porters' wages by twenty pence an hour, refusing them pay for sick leave or overtime, reducing holidays to thirteen days a year and removing £50,000 from the nursing budget.

■ Scunthorpe's waiting list for cataract surgery has been made artificially smaller as patients only appear on the eighteen month waiting list once their sight deteriorates to 25%.

■ General managers' wages rose from £25.7m in 1987 to £251.5m in 1991, coinciding with a rise in NHS managers from 7,000 to 132,000 to implement the reforms.

■ In December Guildford's Royal Surrey County Hospital Trust, faced with a £750,000 debt, cancelled all routine NHS operations except those on patients from fund-holding GPs.

■ A quarter of beds at Northampton's private St Andrews psychiatric hospital are occupied by NHS patients, including some from the Bloomsbury Health Authority in London which pays £5,500 a week for each of their 60 'out-liers'.



NHS ancillary staff are among the lowest paid

Oh to be in England...

■ Now that April's here and 64,000 cows frolic in the fields. Watch their antics – they have BSE and 'experts' are falling over themselves to contradict one another as to why the numbers have doubled rather than halved since the practice of feeding them on dead, contaminated sheep was discontinued.

■ Restoring the fire damaged Windsor Castle will cost the taxpayer an estimated £30-40m. Perhaps some of the 60,000 'volunteers' for the newly announced Community Action Programme will be drafted in to keep labour costs to a minimum...

■ Stinging but accurate critique of the month: 'If I were Salman Rushdie, I would be reserved towards Fred Halliday's embrace. Halliday's enthusiasms are seldom long in duration, and as the immense list of discarded causes littering his curriculum vitae eloquently attests, his loyalties shift in time with the tastes of each fresh sponsor. The sea change inflicted on his world-view by tenure at the London School of Economics offers gratifying confirmation of how quickly a man can learn to sing for his supper in the right key.' Alexander Cockburn, *New Statesman* 26 February.

■ And Rest in Peace, Bobby Moore, England's finest hour and all that, but for Terry Venables to suggest that the whole country observe two minutes silence is overstating the case a little surely... after all, his last occupation was sports editor of the *Sunday Sport*.

■ 14,000 job losses announced on just one day. A grim picture indeed. Unless you happen to live in West Belfast where you are probably unemployed already and the faces of the British soldiers who had just been served their redundancy notices, must have been a sight for sore eyes.

■ The total revenue Labour will lose from its severance with the unions is a drop in the ocean compared to what the Tory Party could have collected as a backhander if it had been prepared to indulge the Duke of Westminster's landlordly aspirations. The Duke wanted to be able to sell leaseholds on some of his Mayfair and Belgravia estates (worth £3.7 billion) but retain the freeholds. The government is pressing ahead with the Housing and Urban Development Bill which gives leaseholders the right to buy the freehold. So the Duke and the Tory Party have parted company. Any volunteers to start a single issue party to fill the breach?

■ Enough of John Birt's tax arrangements. Much more interesting and scandalous is his taste in bathroom design. Apparently, when honest John arrived at the Beeb, announcing he came 'from a different world', one of his first acts, along with a little hiring and a lot of firing, was to have installed a luxurious private bathroom. His next was to have it removed again as it was not quite the required shade of green.

■ Not so funny. They closed down the notorious psychiatric unit on Brixton prison's F-Wing, which used to house 239 prisoners, changed its name to G-Wing and re-opened it to house non-psychiatric prisoners. Then they repainted part of the hospital wing and opened it as a new psychiatric unit, housing 66 prisoners. So where have the remaining 173 (assuming numbers remain fairly constant) got to? Either they don't need psychiatric treatment after all and have become 'ordinary' prisoners or they do need it and are in places like Ashworth, from where they may never be released or Friern Barnet from where they will be released very soon because it is being closed down. This is called 'care in the community'.

BLAMING THE CHILDREN

The murder of two-year-old James Bulger has led to an intensified attack on working class children, youth and their families. ALEXA BYRNE and VIRMAN MAN examine the current crusade against juvenile crime.

For days the tabloid press ran emotive banner headlines creating an atmosphere of hatred and fear. By the time police stormed their way into 12-year-old Jonathan Green's house to arrest him on suspicion of the murder, a lynch mob had gathered, baying for him to be hanged. The *Sun's* report portrayed the family as 'real low life', and quoted residents who described them as 'gypsies' who 'really lowered the tone'. The boy was later released without charge. The families of two 10-year-olds who were eventually charged with the murder were also convicted by the press. The mother of one of them was called 'a horrible cow', 'fat, rough-looking', 'completely mad', and 'always on the bevvv'.

On the other side of the coin the broadsheets devoted hundreds of column inches to debating the whys and wherefores of youth crime. Arrogant, overpaid 'experts' urged us to accept 'the presence of evil in humans'. Sally Emerson in *The Times* reckoned that she could pick out evil toddlers and children 'who are born bad', who are filled with 'a dark enthralling beast ready to threaten and destroy'. Her remedy? 'Bring back hell.'

This superstition and backwardness, which is the antithesis of materialism and science, is echoed by government ministers and opposition spokespersons alike. There is the usual bleating for a return to Christian values. Parents, teachers and 'soft-hearted do-gooders' are berated for failing to instil into children the concepts of right and wrong. Kenneth Baker, ex-Home Secretary, spoke of youth crime 'emanating from the edge of evil' into 'the heart of

darkness', whilst Tony Blair, Shadow Home Secretary, sought to return the Labour Party to its Christian ethical base and envisaged a decline into 'moral chaos'.

In one sense, the focus on juvenile crime following James Bulger's murder could not have come at a more convenient time for the government. The Prime Minister announced a new crusade against working class children who commit crime. As the

Courts should ... send nasty, persistent, juvenile, little offenders away somewhere.
Kenneth Clarke

'party of law and order', the Tories know only too well that a bout of populist law and order tub-thumping is an excellent way to deflect attention from their failed economic policies. Their last attempt at this during the early 1980s recession led to 'short sharp shock' detention centres, one of which had to close in 1983 because 17 inmates were on 'strict suicide observation' and five prisoners committed suicide. The whole initiative was quickly disbanded when it was found to have no apparent effect on re-offending rates and was massively expensive.

The current recession and the handwringing over 'morals' and 'community', however, has provided a convenient opportunity for Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke to resurrect proposals for dealing sharply with 'nasty, persistent juvenile little

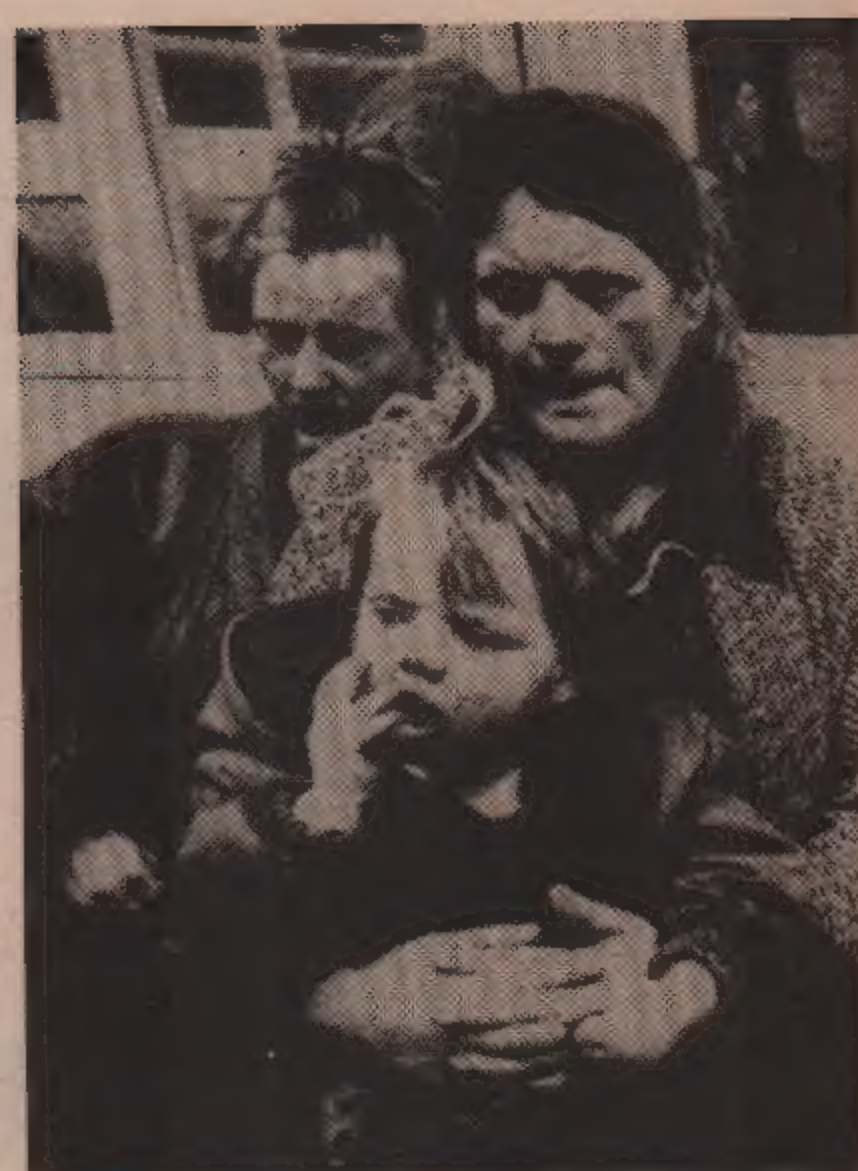
offenders'. His intention is to grant new powers to the courts to detain 12-15-year-olds in a national network of specially-built secure training centres. The emphasis will be on 'education' and 'affection' – from prison screws?

Competing for the 'law and order' vote, the Labour Party came up with its own prescriptions: Shadow Health Secretary, David Blunkett, advocated a compulsory nine-month



programme of community service for all 16-21-year-olds, and called for an end to 'paternalistic indulgence of the subculture of thuggery, noise, nuisance and anti-social behaviour'. Tony Blair weighed in before the Tories with a blast similar to that of the Association of Chief Police Officers – to expand the current secure accommodation facilities and to impose a statutory duty on local authorities to deal with first-time juvenile offenders. He stressed Labour's support for locking up persistent offenders 'clearly out of control and a menace to society'.

In the scramble for the initiative on law and order, neither party is relating its policies to hard facts. Whilst the police suggest that youth crime is up 54 per cent in the last ten years, the Home Office's own figures show a decline. Both the National Associ-



ation for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and the Howard League for Penal Reform have said that there is no evidence to show that child crime is 'nastier and more frequent'.

So how can the headlong rush to build prisons for children and to lock up more youth be explained? According to John Major we should 'condemn a little more and understand a little less'. The truth is that he and his class have never cared about working class children. Vicious economic policies over the last two decades have forced working class families into deepening poverty and deprivation. Children are at the bottom of the pile. As Jeremy Seabrook (*New Statesman*, 26 February 1993) put it, they are 'the walking wounded of market culture'.

Children have suffered because of the systematic erosion of rights to welfare benefits. Current research shows that single parent families have been hardest hit: their children are three times more likely to die from ill health than children with two parents in the highest social grouping. Education cuts have closed schools, making those remaining even more crowded and decrepit. Children are crammed with an irrelevant curriculum that dooms them to failure; youth centres have been shut down, and at the end of this the dole queues await – there are nearly one million unemployed 16-25-year-olds.

Frances Crook of the Howard League has said that locking up more juveniles will produce only abused children who 'either become brutalised bullies, or... so desperate they mutilate themselves'. Since 1989 30 teenagers have committed suicide in prison.

Capitalism always creates scapegoats to strengthen its oppression of the working class. Today it is hammering children.

Most people realise that crime is simply the result of a grossly disproportionate distribution of wealth and privilege. A reflection of the present state of property relations. George Jackson



Two ten-year olds charged with James Bulger's murder faced a hostile scrum outside the court

RACIST BRITAIN

UNEMPLOYMENT

● As unemployment officially reached 3 million, approximately 12% of white people are acknowledged to be out of work. But for black people, unemployment rates are more than double with a national average of 25%. That is one black adult in every four on the dole.

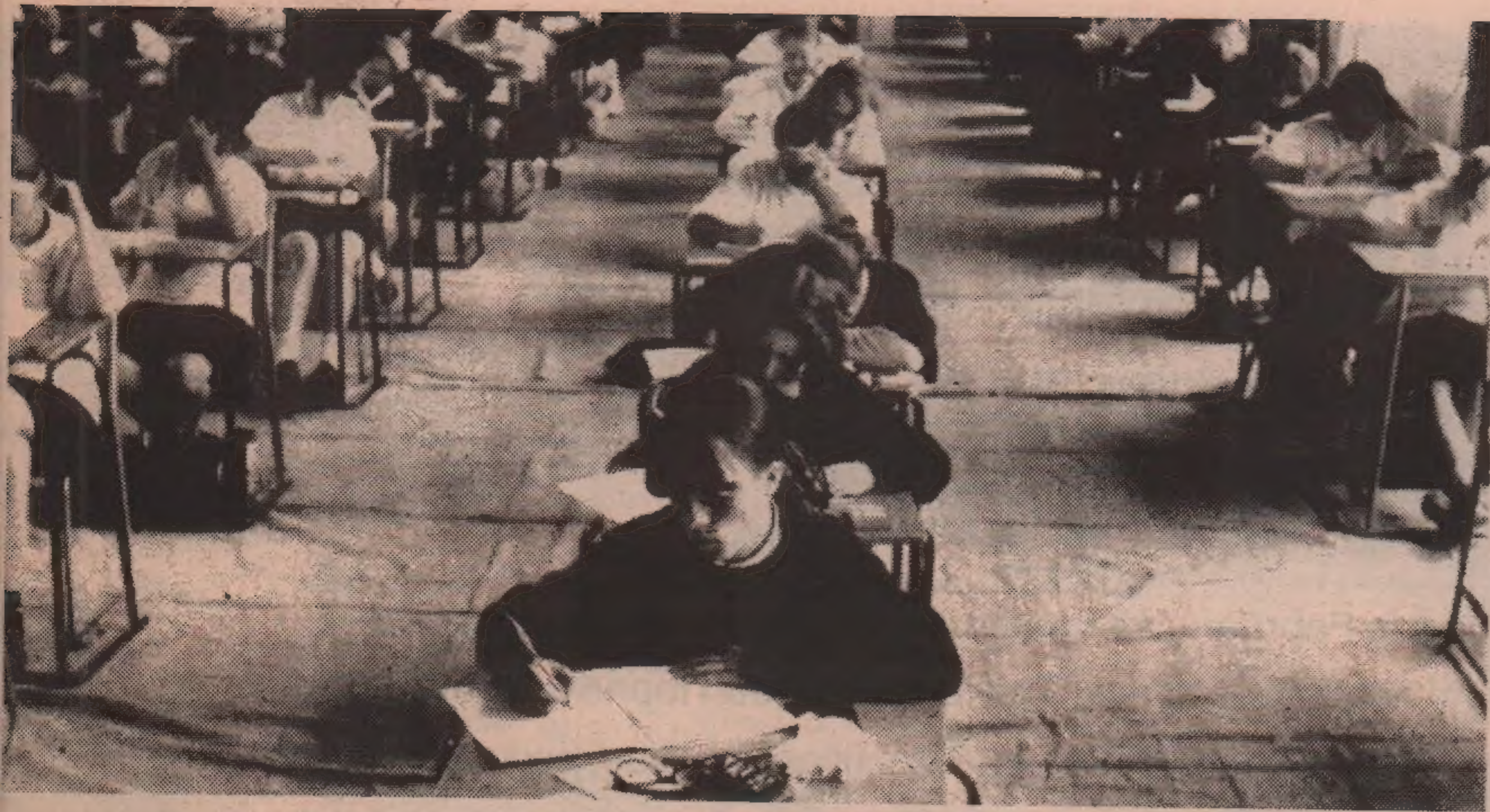
In areas with large black communities, the rates are even higher. A recent survey commissioned by the union GMB showed that in Tower Hamlets, East London, unemployment rates for Asians is about 42%, and in Hackney, 29%. It gives a rate for Sheffield of 30%; Oldham, 31%; Calderdale, 26%; Liverpool 35% and Manchester 30%. Even these figures disguise the real effects of growing unemployment on the black commu-

nity – in Moss Side in Manchester, the unemployment rate for black males under 25 is approaching 85%!

RACIST ATTACKS

● A recent survey by the London Research Centre found that out of an estimated 480,000 black households in London, 48,000 had suffered racist attacks either in or near their homes.

It is estimated that less than 20 per cent of all racist attacks are reported to the police, but even the government has had to acknowledge the rise in racist attacks. Figures given to parliament last year showed that the total number of recorded racist attacks in England and Wales had risen from 5,900 in 1985 to 7,882 in 1991. Eight black people were murdered in such attacks last year.



EDUCATION IN CHAOS

The National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers has voted to boycott all the government-imposed SATS exams. The NUT has voted in principle against the Key Stage 3 English exams planned for June 1993. For readers not familiar with this jargon, SUSAN DAVIDSON offers a summary of Tory education reforms and their consequences.

To go back to the start we must return to the days of Thatcher when Kenneth Baker was Minister of Education. Between them they cooked up the Education Reform Act, which aimed to end the expansion of comprehensive education, to encourage the privatisation of schools and to centralise teaching and the curriculum under the Department for Education.

The Thatcher/Baker Education Reform Act (ERA 1988) introduced the idea of a statutory National Curriculum (except for Independent Schools) with exams, or Standard Attainment Tests built in. These SATS are to be compulsory in the Core Curriculum subjects, English, maths, science and technology (in Wales, in addition, Welsh) at the ages of 7 (Key Stage 1), 11 (Key Stage 2), 14 (Key Stage 3), and 16 (Key Stage 4). The results of all these exams are to be published in public league table.

But this is only one part of ERA. The same Act introduced Local Management of Schools (LMS) which reduces the role of local education authorities and transfers powers to individual school governing bodies. Further legislation and financial incentives have encouraged schools to 'opt out' completely from local authority control. As well as this the government has set up City Technology Colleges (CTCs). These are secondary schools which have greater resources, especially in computer systems, and have a 'selective' entry, choosing only the brightest pupils or those with the right attitude to discipline.

Inevitably within this system, schools will prefer bright and well-behaved children. This is why there has recently been a massive growth in expulsions of 'troublesome' pupils. Parents are being encouraged to look at the league tables and send their children to the best achieving schools. And since the money goes with the children, schools will be in competition with each other to attract the largest numbers of 'good' pupils in order to increase their income.

Clearly schools are being pressurised to stream their classes and to 'teach to the exam' as the logical way to do well in the SATS and get a good place in the league tables. The whole scenario of 'sink' schools and bottom streams follows from this Thatcherite 'marketing' of schools.

The idea of a National Curriculum is not in itself a bad one. It makes sense, for example, that national standards and objectives are laid down for basic educational goals and achievements. Reading ability, class size, provision of an all-round curriculum for all children should be nationally, not locally, determined for example. The notorious secrecy of Britain's education system, with its vast differentials in spending and provision on schools has long been a national scandal. Many of the government's proposals to establish measures of comparison have a place in a state education system. This, however, is not the main political purpose of the Education Reform Act.

The real thrust of the Act is control of both the financing and political direction of education. In a period when an increasing public welfare budget has to be funded the Tories have devised a strategy to regulate expenditure and the deployment of resources. They have introduced the ethos and goals of consumer choice in education while at the same time extending central control.

The imposition of the National Curriculum and the SATS makes sense for the Tories because it standardises educational provision at the lowest levels of the system at the lowest cost. At the same time it offers 'consumer choice' and diversity at the top and at selected fringes of the school system.

There are also moves to give private capital access to potential markets in the education 'business' from which it has previously been excluded. Not only are cleaning, school dinners, books and stationery being put out to tender, but also inspection of schools, swimming lessons, computer resources even psychiatric and learning support services are being marketed

through private agencies.

This is the context underlying the rebellion against the Key Stage 3 SATS exams. During the nearly five years of ERA there have been countless revisions of the National Curriculum. A great deal of work that teachers now have to do by law has been largely hidden from the public.

In English in Secondary Schools, for example, each pupil must be given a level on a ten point scale in 5 Attainment Targets (ATs) or areas of learning. AT1 is Speaking and Listening, AT2 is Reading, AT3 is Writing, AT4 is Spelling and AT5 is Presentation. Every AT level for every child in every class must be recorded 3 times every year and kept with 3 samples of written work, an Oral record and a Reading record together with statements of self-assessment.

English teachers are also responsible for teaching and testing part of the technology curriculum and must prepare students for computer processing exams at Key Stage 3. They must additionally ensure that their Schemes of Work cover 'economic awareness' 'knowledge about language' and 'equal opportunities', as well as the curriculum statements of attainment in English.

It is no wonder that 96% of NAS/UWT members were in favour of a boycott of all SATS. As well as creating teachers' resistance to this nonsensical workload, the government has failed, also, to win the support of the 'top' schools and most educationalists.

The argument against the English SATS recently became a media issue when a leading educationalist Brian Cox, editor of the famed Black Papers (1969), attacked the arrogance of government ministers. He argued that the secretive Schools Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) has bullied, dismissed and ignored dozens of practised advisers. SEAC is headed by John Marebon, a Cambridge don of mediaeval studies who, alone, apparently has the ear of John Patten, Secretary of State for Education. Brian Cox has stated that he would not be voting Labour because it

ON THE DOLE

On 18 March the Secretary of State for Employment, Gillian Shephard, announced that unemployment, in adjusted figures, had fallen by 22,000 to 2,971,100 in February. GAVIN SCOTT counts the toll of unemployment.

The figures are surprising considering the large rise in December (over 60,000) and January (about half December's rise), and the large number of new redundancies announced in that time. Also, as they are fond of telling us, any fall in unemployment always lags somewhat behind an upturn in the economy. Unless the previous several months are counted as a recovery (is anybody there?) it is difficult not to be suspicious of the accuracy of these latest figures. Perhaps they have come up with yet another new, even more 'inventive' way of calculating the figures and have neglected to tell us.

On 18 February, the day the announcement was made that unemployment (in unadjusted figures) had topped the 3 million mark, the *Financial Times* reported the fact that: 'the attention grabbing fall and rise in unemployment over the last few years obscures the more chilling feature of Britain's record: the rising level of unemployment that persists whether the economy is in recession or growing fast.'

And, it admitted: 'the standard explanations [among the ruling class] for persistently high unemployment - powerful trade unions, generous unemployment benefits or an immobile workforce - do not fit well with Britain's 1980s experience.'

At the peak of the late 1980s boom unemployment was still higher than in any other post-war decade. This results from the change in the structure of the British economy that took place, with fewer unskilled workers required in former industrial heartlands. (Most of the long-term unemployed in the 1980s were men without any qualifications in the north of England.) The big difference in this recession is that professional workers in the south have been hit, and unemployment among all groups despite qualifications has risen. Even so, the professions and service sectors

have not taken the brunt of it, with their unemployment rate going up in banking and finance by 2.4 per cent since 1989, but those in manufacturing employment suffering a 5.8 per cent rise. Unemployment rates have also risen much faster for people in blue or white-collar occupations than professions. Employment from March 1989 to September 1992 fell in construction by 18 per cent, in manufacturing by 14 per cent, among the self-employed by 7 per cent, and in services by only 2 per cent.

Black workers have been hardest hit with over 25 per cent unemployment in 1992, more than twice the national average. The youngest (18-24 year-olds) suffer higher rates than any other age group.

Unemployment has begun to affect the Tory heartlands. In 1984, only just over 40 per cent of the unemployed owned their own homes, while around 58 per cent rented. In 1992, just under 50 per cent owned their own homes. In 1984, around 40 per cent of the unemployed had 'A'/'O' levels or professional qualifications, but in 1992 just over 50 per cent. In 1984, the unemployment rate in the north was just over 14 per cent and in the south 9 per cent. In 1992, they were 10 per cent and 9 per cent respectively, with the south jumping up from around 5 per cent in 1989.

The big difference in this recession is that the services sector will not be able, unlike in the early 1980s, to take in many of those thrown out of other sectors. The *Financial Times* concluded:

'The recession is spreading the effect of falling demand for low skill labour to the south and to the service sector. Even when the recovery comes, many of these jobs will only return at increasingly low wages. It is the poorly educated, not the frightened middle classes, who will still be bearing the brunt when this recession is just a painful memory.'

has consistently failed to oppose the Tory developments in education.

The English SATS proposed for June have been described variously as, 'Models of Imperfection' and that they 'display a pedestrian coarseness which is grossly at odds with the living tradition of English'. The tests have reduced literature to one word answers and understanding to filling in gaps with the right word.

On one level the tests are based on the nostalgia of certain Tories who were educated in the 1950s. Little bits of Shakespeare and other literature from 'our national heritage' are served up in testable bite-sized chunks. The anthology that pupils must read is widely criticised as 'slick, dogmatic and superficial'.

Behind all this is the real agenda of cuts and political control of education. By enforcing exams, tests and assessments, the government is ensuring basic low level provision of state education for the majority. Superior education provision will be available for a minority. There will

always be suppliers who will offer a superior product at the right price. This is the explanation of the apparent contradiction between the firm central control of the National Curriculum, and the Tory's talk of consumer choice and diversity.

The opposition to the tests this year could grow into a wider protest about the need to retain the best of comprehensive education. For this to happen teachers must work together with the growing parent protest over cuts in education budgets, testing, and under-resourcing of schools.

In an article in the *Times Educational Supplement*, Ted Wragg, Exeter University Professor of Education asks the Chair of SEAC, 'What the bloody hell does all this crap mean?' The answer is this. Capitalism in crisis can no longer pretend to offer comprehensive education to all the children. The brute nature of class society, its privileges, elitism, competitiveness and wastage of lives are now clearly exposed in Tory plans for the British education system.

Why is the government so concerned to conceal the truth about damage being done to the air we breathe, the water we drink, the land upon which our food is grown and the ozone layer that protects life from the sun's ultra-violet radiation? All of these – the essentials of life itself – are showing irrefutable signs of damage and degeneration. Yet the government's primary concern is to prevent serious discussion and action. Why?

Because the British government – like all capitalist states – is concerned not about the welfare of its citizens and the natural environment in which they live, but the profit-making activities of the massive multinational conglomerates that control the world's economy and its natural resources. These multinationals are the engines of a system that recognises only one concern – profit. It has chewed up and spat out the remains of billions of workers in the process of profit making and will happily chew up and spit out the earth itself in its drive to accumulate capital.

Profit versus the world

Capitalism's tendency to destroy the very foundations of life lie in the nature of system itself. It is true that all modes of production, all applications of human social labour to nature, consume and exhaust natural resources. But under capitalism, with its massive productive powers, this process assumes a qualitatively more intense and destructive character, which is furthermore beyond social control.

Because the sole concern of capital and the capitalist class is the creation of profits it can have no long term concern for the natural environment of human society. Indeed, its interests are systematically opposed to them. Production for profit requires cheap raw materials on a vast scale; it requires growth and expansion constrained by no social needs. To this end it has developed mass consumer markets and 'throw-away' production while its advertising agents specialise in generating new and wasteful needs. Capitalism requires that all expenditure not directly producing a profit be kept to a minimum and thus will seek to avoid environmental protection costs in much the same way as it seeks to ignore or minimise the costs of health and safety for its workforce.

Capitalism has been responsible for unleashing gigantic developments in science, technology and the productivity of labour which have transformed the world, both for good and ill. But today capitalist social relations threaten the world with disaster. As Marx said:

'At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production... From forms of development of the productive relations these relations turn into their fetters.'

Capitalist relations have now become more than a fetter, they have become a death threat to humanity. Today the world economy is dominated by huge multinationals. With branches in hundreds of countries they often control every stage of production from mining raw materials through to the marketing of the end product. Planning production on vast scales, they have more power than many a government, and indeed their decisions affect the lives of billions of people. But their purpose is the enrichment of a small number of industrialists, rather than the satisfaction of the needs of people. Whilst production remains under the control of these monopoly private interests it is directly opposed to the interests of humanity and to the proper, conscious and socially planned husbandry of the earth's resources and the harmonious development of society and its natural environment.

POLLUTED BRITAIN

For several days in February, air quality in London was so poor that one in five Londoners' health was at risk. The tons of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide emitted by 3.2 million vehicles, power stations and factories had concentrated in a poisonous cloud above the city. Whilst health experts advised those with respiratory problems to stay indoors, the government assured the public that air quality was 'good'. This says a great deal about similar government claims concerning the safety of water quality, nuclear power and pesticide use. EDDIE ABRAHAMS and MAXINE

WILLIAMS argue that when it comes to the environmental crisis afflicting the world and Britain, there are lies, damned lies and government statements.

Today, the world's largest 500 companies control 70% of world trade 80% of foreign investment and 30% of world gross domestic product. Only eight nations in the world have gross domestic products greater than the assets of the world's leading banks. In 1989, the Japanese bank, Dai-ichi Kangyo had assets of \$358.2bn whilst, for example, Canada's GDP was \$363.6bn. Their power is such that little effective control over their destructive activities is possible. Thus for example when the US introduced some limited pollution legislation, capital simply moved over the border to Mexico. There are now over 2,000 factories on the Mexican side of the border operating without any environmental control. This area, according to the American Medical Association, has become a 'virtual cesspool' with raw sewage spilling from its sewers (and ironically leaking onto Californian beaches) and rivers full of cadmium, arsenic and toxic metals.

Mexico, along with the rest of the Third World suffers the worst consequences of imperialist exploitation of its people and resources for the benefit of a tiny handful of the world's population. The richer countries with 25% of world population use 80% of its energy and 70% of its fossil fuel. They have 86% of its industry and 90% of its cars. They are thus responsible for the overwhelming majority of poisonous chemicals and gases spewed into the earth's waters and sunk into its land. They produce 60% of the world's industrial waste and 90% of its most dangerous waste.

The Third World is paying a terrible social and environmental price for the pillaging activities of imperialist multinationals. Nevertheless, as the following examples from Britain will show, imperialist countries themselves are not immune to the social, political and environmental effects of monopoly capitalism. Even in its own backyard it must create filth and squalor. Whilst the rich can isolate themselves from its worst short-term consequences, the working class cannot.

Consumption without limit

The post-World War Two era was marked by an unprecedented growth in the world capitalist economy. In

their relentless efforts to expand markets and amass greater and greater fortunes, multinational companies undertook the systematic development of the mass market and planned obsolescence – 'throw-away production'. This has drastically increased the consumption of raw material and energy. Between 1945 and 1970 capitalist nations used more petroleum and non-fuel minerals than had been consumed in all previous human history.

Central to this process was the massive, uncontrolled and wasteful growth of the consumer durable industry, the lynchpin of which is the development of the motor industry.

In 1989 35 million new vehicles were produced world wide. There are currently 19 million cars in Britain. By 2025 there will be 35 million. A new advertisement for Jaguar asks 'What are dreams for except to come true?' The dream of car ownership has in fact become a nightmare of pollution, death and destruction.

Cars generate more air pollution than any other activity. In Britain in 1990 they produced 90% of carbon monoxide, 51% of nitrogen oxides and 41% of all hydrocarbons. The average car produces four times its weight in carbon emissions each year.

As well as being a major source of greenhouse gases, these pollutants cause acid rain – Britain has the highest incidence of acid rain-caused tree damage in Europe. Carbon monoxide aggravates chest and heart problems, whilst hydrocarbons are suspected of causing cancer. Each year 28 million gallons of motor oil leak into the British fresh water system.

To accommodate the mighty god – car – vast areas of land are destroyed in order to build new roads. Every mile of motor way destroys 25 acres of land, much of it in areas of scientific and natural value, and uses 250,000 tonnes of sand and gravel. Rock quarrying for road material is equally damaging. New quarries in Wales, for instance, threaten the wooded valleys of Dyfed.

The uncontrolled expansion of private and individual car production and use has also had devastating social consequences. In Britain every year, 5,000 people are killed and 60,000 badly injured in car accidents with 250,000 slightly hurt. Internationally, 265,000 are killed and 10

million injured. The structure of towns themselves is altered to meet the needs, not of those who live in them, but of road traffic.

Car-parks and roads gobble space used as playgrounds and community leisure, while urban communities are being broken up by ring roads. Huge shopping centres are built on the edges of towns and can only be reached by car. Shopping areas serving the carless (38% of British adults do not drive – overwhelmingly the poor, the old and women) in towns decline. Children have become virtually housebound as parents fear allowing them to venture into heavy traffic areas. According to a government traffic model known as COBA, by which the government assesses road proposals, pedestrians, cyclists and bus passengers are classified as 'less valuable' than motorists.

The massive market in private cars is socially unnecessary. It is in fact an obscenity. But despite the irrefutable and documented damage done to society and the environment, the British government is committed to its expansion at the expense of public transport. Government policy in this, as in every other case, is determined by the interests of major capitalist monopolies organised into the Road Lobby: car companies, oil companies, road-building firms, motoring organisations and lorry operators. Again, the power of multinationals is clear: British Petroleum is Britain's biggest company, operating in 70 countries. It is not merely involved in the production, refining and selling of petroleum products but also in chemicals and food and is now one of largest producers of animal feed.

It is currently exploring for new oil fields in China, Vietnam, West Africa, the Philippines, Mexico, Australia. The huge construction company Tarmac, a major contributor to Tory funds, has done extremely well from the current road building programme, quite apart from being given £55m when it took over part of the government's Property Services Agency.

Can anyone doubt the power of such interests to alter government policy on transport? Indeed the Road Lobby's main organisation, the British Road Federation, was formed in 1932 to 'counter the sinister and distorted propaganda of the rail-

ways.' Ever since then governments have been in the Road Lobby's grip. Annually the British taxpayer pays £2.8bn to subsidise company cars. Between 1985 and 1989 public expenditure on roads was up by 2%, whilst expenditure on rail and buses/tubes was down 45% and 19% respectively. While slashing subsidies to and preparing to privatise and destroy railways, the government is planning to spend £20bn on road building programmes in the next 15 years. According to *Private Eye* 'the map of those road "improvements" bears an uncanny resemblance to the map of rail routes likely to close after privatisation.'

In recent Road Lobby victories, the Department of Transport has forced road schemes ahead in Twyford Down, Oxleas Wood and Hackney Marshes. In Twyford Down protesters have been met with beatings by the Group 4 private security force as well as surveillance and phone tapping. Oxleas Wood, the last piece of ancient woodland in London, is having a six lane highway driven through it. As with Hackney Marshes, the Department of the Environment (a misnomer if ever there was one) is giving alternative land to replace the open spaces lost. In both cases the land offered is in no sense either adequate or of equal social or natural value.

Poisonous technology unleashed

Throughout the twentieth century, but particularly since 1945, a scientific and technological revolution in the chemicals, nuclear, electronic and oil/petroleum derivatives industries has taken to new heights capital's destruction and pollution of our natural environment. Never before have so many lethal chemical and toxic substances been dumped into the earth's waters in such quantities.

Controlling, treating and minimising such waste is regarded as an unproductive expenditure. Thus the government legalises water pollution making it policy that 'rivers have to be used for waste disposal by industry'. In consequence, Britain is the biggest polluter of seas in Northern Europe. A Greenpeace study of the 'Filthy Fifty' British industries shows them to be legally discharging



used to deadly effect by the US in Vietnam) are commonly used. Not only are farm workers killed and injured by these poisons but the residue in food is alarming. Many substances used in Britain are banned elsewhere but the data on their toxicity remains an Official Secret here. The Ministry of Agriculture justifies this on the grounds of 'commercial confidentiality'.

In 1989 the British chemical companies' income from farmers was £1,197 million. It is the political and economic weight of these forces which have created a form of agriculture which is now endangering the health of the population and the long-term future of food production.

Who will oppose the polluters?

In the run up to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, John Major said 'We have not destroyed the world out of greed but out of ignorance'. Although Major clearly suffers more than his fair share of ignorance on many issues, there have been enough voices raised about environmental dangers to make ignorance an unconvincing defence for any government. Britain's major contribution to the Rio debate was to lead the move to drop all references to the environmental responsibilities of multinational corporations. Major is clearly not ignorant about who his paymasters are.

None of the capitalist parties, Tory, Liberal Democrat or Labour, has the slightest interest in taking the steps that would be required to begin to halt the social and natural damage wrought by imperialism.

We have shown that the polluters – the multinationals – are immensely powerful. They can buy governments and indeed, as the Iraq war for oil showed, they can hire armies. Who then can and will stand against them? Those who have no interest in the profit system – the oppressed and the working class throughout the world. Pollution does not stop at national boundaries. Nor are the activities of the multinationals concentrated in one nation. The working class internationally has a common interest in opposing the multinationals and the pollution they create.

To do so they will need to build new movements with a strong anti-imperialist and socialist outlook. Many schools of socialist thought have been guilty of disregarding the importance of the environmental question. Prime amongst the guilty have been socialists in the imperialist countries. They have persistently refused to acknowledge the fact that the capitalist drive for growth at all costs and the consequent rampant consumerism of the imperialist nations is both destructive of the poor majority and the natural environment. They have equated socialism with a standard of living produced by the imperialist exploitation of the poor and the earth's resources. Socialists must begin to take up this issue and to recognise that socialism does not mean cars and luxuries for all but means the satisfaction of the basic requirements of human life, something that is denied to two thirds of the world's population. Only when such needs are met can humanity begin to develop its own capacities and its harmonious relationship with the natural world.

Despite the weaknesses of the socialist movement on environmental issues, it remains the case that, as we said in *FRFI* 108 (July/September 1992):

'It is only socialists who have argued for a planned use of resources, international cooperation and the liberation of the poor and oppressed. All of these which have been on our banner for 150 years, are the preconditions for the solution to the environmental catastrophe facing the world... it is time socialists started to push our message home: only socialism can save the planet.'

1.7bn tonnes of pollutants into British and European waters. Annually they infect these waters with 16 tonnes of mercury, 34 tonnes of cadmium, 9,660 tonnes of oil, 2,300 tonnes of organohalogenes and 2,492 tonnes of zinc.

British capital systematically breaches legal limits on pollution. The same Greenpeace report cites Dow Chemicals discharging 21 chemicals into The Wash which do not even appear on its legal list of pollutants. Since 1991 British Steel has breached its limits 19 times as have Beecham Pharmaceuticals. Since 1990 EC pollution standards have been breached over 400 times for estuaries and rivers.

The social and natural consequences of this pollution are enormous and ominous. The National Rivers Authority (NRA) confirms that river pollution is getting worse. Since 1985 5,800km of English and Welsh rivers have become more polluted and over 1,400km of Britain's best rivers have deteriorated. In many parts of the country toxic pollutants, pesticides and PCBs have been detected in fish and wildlife. Many of the chemicals and pesticides seep into groundwaters and aquifers which supply drinking water and are virtually impossible to clean up. As a result millions of people in Britain drink water contaminated with chemicals and pesticides. Radioactive waste poses particularly terrible dangers. Yet BNFL regularly discharges such waste at its Springfield Works in Lancashire. The banks of the River Ribble have been extensively contaminated as a result. Despite legal obligations to reduce radioactive discharges, BNFL argues that 'alternative (effluent reduction systems) would lead to an incremental cost that would effectively price BNFL out of the market.' As ever, profit before people.

Privatisation: where there's brass there's muck

The newly privatised water companies now have profit as their only goal. Yorkshire water was recently prosecuted for discharging raw sewage containing untreated human waste and even condoms into a stream at Driffield. In 1991 24% of Britain's bathing beaches failed to

meet EC bacteria standards. Annually 300 million gallons of raw or virtually untreated sewage is dumped into the English and Welsh seas. Notwithstanding this sordid reality, British water companies are campaigning, in the words of the *Financial Times* for 'more flexible standards on drinking water' regarding current ones to be 'unnecessary and too stringent' and warning that a 'complete elimination' of lead from water could cost £8bn.

A major culprit in air pollution, besides the car, is the privatised electricity industry. Each year the 12 UK Regional Electricity Companies pump 200m tonnes of carbon dioxide into the air, in addition to 2.6m tonnes of sulphur dioxide, 790,000 tonnes of nitrogen oxides which contribute to acid rain and global warming. The power stations are major causes of acid rain which by 1989 had left 28% of British trees significantly damaged as well as severely affecting fisheries. They also generate 38,000 cubic meters of hazardous radioactive waste.

The most efficient method of reducing this damage is to fund research on clean fuel technology and vastly improve efficiency in electricity use. But the electricity industry is opposed to such measures. It makes its profits by selling more and more electricity not from encouraging its more efficient use. In 1990, 90% of the electricity industry's profits came from selling electricity as opposed to service retail outlets and electrical contract work. In its championing of nuclear power, the British government has repeatedly attacked pollution generated by coal-fired power stations. This is rich coming from a government which has refused to fund clean coal research. Indeed in February, the government announced that it is to end all funding of clean technology research at Cheltenham. Such work could produce not only cleaner but also cheaper ways of burning coal but is doomed because it would provide one less stick to beat the miners with.

Where there's muck there's brass

British land is also being systematically poisoned, becoming a dumping ground for hazardous toxic and chemical wastes. Whilst most dan-

gerous toxic wastes are dumped into the Third World, Britain imported 160,000 tonnes worth in 1989. By 1995 its incinerating capacity is scheduled to rise to 500,000 tonnes. Much of both domestic and industrial waste, incinerated or not, is dispersed in landfills where chemical combustion makes timebombs of them. Over 10,000 of these are distributed across Britain with little or no monitoring. With regulations less stringent than in Germany, the USA or Switzerland, Britain has become the second largest European importer of dangerous waste. In 1989 it was one of the fastest growing businesses, worth £734 million. Defending the profits from poisons, Sir Hugh Rossi, Chair of a House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment said in 1989 that the toxic waste trade 'is an important contributor to the nation's balance of payments.'

The government's attitude to all this is made plain by the fact that its Controlled Waste Inspectorate to cover more than 4,000 sites licensed to deal in the disposal of toxic waste, has but five officers. More recently, the government has put aside plans for a register of contaminated land. It was deemed too expensive to survey land for contamination! This move has won the approval of the building companies and major lenders who had complained, according to the *Financial Times*, that a register 'threatened to blight property values across much of the country' and 'could inhibit commercial development'.

The destruction of the land

Capitalist agriculture has been characterised by the intensive use of land, raising its productivity through the use of massive amounts of fertilisers, pesticides and machinery. Farms have become bigger, smaller farmers have been driven out of business and large food companies have begun farming. Government has invariably protected the wealthy landowners and the large agri-business interests which now dominate food production.

Animals are subjected to the drive for ever upward productivity even when their products are already forming food mountains. Large tax subsidies are given to farmers and com-

panies engaged in intensive animal farming.

The results have become visible as recent food scares. The use of antibiotics in factory farmed chickens, for example has not prevented salmonella becoming endemic. Hundreds of cows continue to be slaughtered each week because, to cheapen feeding costs, they have been fed the contaminated remains of sheep with scrapie. Thus Mad Cow disease has entered the human food chain with unknown consequences. The response of former Agriculture Minister John Gummer was to scorn health fears by feeding beefburgers to his unfortunate child as photographers clicked away.

The land itself has been scarred by intensive production which has enabled farmers to grow four times as much wheat on the same land as they could forty years ago. Extensive use of fertilisers, pesticides, land drainage to allow cropping of normally unsuitable land, the use of heavy machinery and the growth of winter wheat have all contributed to soil erosion.

The problem is potentially explosive. In *Our Food Our Land*, Richard Body writes:

'Take the not untypical county of Bedfordshire: according to scientists at the government's soil research station at Rothamstead, Bedfordshire is losing its soil at an average rate of one tonne an acre each year. If this loss is allowed to continue, some time in the twenty first century the farmland of Bedfordshire will become agriculturally useless and no longer worth cultivating.'

As the soil has been depleted, artificial fertilisers are used in even greater quantities. Between 1961 and 1981 fertiliser use trebled. By 1989 farmers were spending £757 million on these products. Many types of grain are now dependent on heavy fertiliser use. The result of heavy use of nitrogen fertilisers has been that the safety of water is seriously compromised. Nitrates are cancer-causing and British water supplies now exceed World Health Organisation guidelines.

Pesticide use has increased – in 1973 farmers spent £37 million on these, by 1989 the amount was £440 million. Paraquat and 245-T (otherwise known as Agent Orange and

THE DEATH OF BRITISH RAIL

The recent plans for the privatisation of British Rail are in one sense laughable: having been changed so many times during successive leaks, they amount to no more than setting up franchises for a restrictive range of services. Yet behind them is a serious intent: that of completing the destruction of a national railway system, and completing the victory of the all-powerful road lobby. ROBERT CLOUGH surveys the track record.

The 1945 Labour Government inherited a railway system which was almost completely exhausted. The war had seen unprecedented levels of traffic, with minimal maintenance of track and equipment; the total backlog was estimated at £180m (equivalent to between £4-5bn today). Yet the nationalisation terms were generous beyond belief: £1bn of British Transport Stock was issued to the former owners as compensation (in today's money, approaching £30bn), with a guaranteed return of 4 per cent, even though throughout the 1930s the four main railway companies had frequently operated at a loss.

There was no attempt at any modernisation. Alone of major European rail networks, British Railways continued to invest heavily in steam locomotives, building a further 2,500 between 1948-58. Almost none of the 1.2 million goods wagons it inherited were brake-fitted; the braking power was provided by the locomotive alone. This meant that goods trains were unable to travel at more than 20 mph, since they were so difficult to stop. Track conditions were so bad that most lines were restricted to 60 mph speed limits, so that no services averaged more than 38 mph end-to-end.



Private bus company Stagecoach is already running franchised rail coaches on the InterCity network and is eyeing Scotrail for takeover

class and working class which could afford it. In short, the motor car changed from a luxury product for the consumption of the ruling class into a commodity for much broader sections of the population. In 1951, there were 2 million licenced cars; this more than doubled to 4.9 million by 1960, and then doubled again by 1970.

way programme amounting to £212m.

The investment in steam was now reaping its costly harvest: it was extremely expensive to operate, particularly in branch line conditions where diesel multiple units (DMUs) had been proven to reduce running costs by 30 to 75 per cent. Yet even a rapid programme of introducing such DMUs in the late 1950s (many of which still operate today) failed to stem losses. In a desperate attempt to recover the position, the dieselisation programme was accelerated. With little experience of building diesel locos, many of those introduced in the 1950s and early 1960s were prone to breakdown and were scrapped before the steam engines they had been designed to replace. Others had to have their power derated to extend their working life, and could not meet the improvements in timetabling that was their *raison d'être*. It was not until 1971 that the London-Bristol run time consistently beat the pre-war average of 105 minutes.

The Beeching axe

In 1959, Ernest Marples, who owned 75 per cent of a family construction firm heavily involved in road-building, became Minister of Transport. He appointed the Stedeford Committee to investigate the running of British Railways. Although its report was never publicised, one of its members, Dr Beeching, was appointed Chairman of British Railways in 1961. He produced a report which proposed the closure of 5,000 passenger route miles and 2,350 stations, on the grounds that they were 'uneconomic'. Yet the formulae used in arriving at this conclusion were bogus, based as they were on ticket sales at the individual stations involved. On this basis, the station at the top of Mount Snowdon would be 'uneconomic', since ticket sales there are practically nil, but closing it would stop any hope of ticket sales from the station at the bottom. This notion of 'contributory income', income generated by other stations, was never used. Yet a contemporary study which looked at 1,400 miles of lightly-used railway in Wales, Scotland, Devon and Cornwall found that although running ex-

penses of £8.7m outweighed direct income of £5.2 million, there was a 'contributory income' of £6m, of which £5m would be lost if the lines were closed. In other words, closing lines cost money elsewhere in the network.

Opposition to the Beeching Plan was insignificant: the unions themselves displayed no concern. Thus when a delegation of Scottish railwaymen went to lobby the NUR in November 1961 to campaign against threatened closures, only two executive members bothered to greet them, and they were both docked an hour's pay for their trouble. With £6.5m assets, the NUR was to spend no more than £7,500 fighting Beeching.

The advent of the Labour Government in 1964 accelerated the process. In the election campaign, Wilson had declared: 'Over the last ten years, 3,600 miles of railway have been closed. That is 19 per cent of the mileage... Yet its closure saved only 7 per cent of the working deficit of British Railways in 1960... If the closure of one fifth of the railway mileage makes so little difference to the operating deficit of British Railways, what will the next one third do?' By May 1965, 32 out of the 38 proposed line closures inherited by Labour had been put into effect, and another 13 added to the list. 1,071 miles were closed in 1965, and 1,200 miles in 1966. Between 1965 and 1969, annual railway investment fell from £121 to £69 million. Beeching may have been the author of the report, but Labour was the executor. The 'white heat of the technological revolution' meant a government as determinedly pro-road as its predecessors. The irony was that, applying the criteria of the Social Service cost/benefit analysis used to justify motorway construction to all the railway lines closed between 1963 and 1966, these resulted

government spent £14bn on developing the national road network, whilst local government spent a further £10bn. All British Rail investment has to be self-financing, and the only major capital scheme was the completion of the London-Edinburgh electrification project, first mooted in the 1955 Modernisation Plan. BR employment fell from 170,000 to 131,000, whilst fares rose faster than inflation to help reduce the subsidies. Maintenance plummeted, workers worked harder and for longer hours, and made mistakes, resulting in accidents such as that at Clapham Junction.

As the government seeks to find takers for its franchising scheme for profitable railway routes, another round of line closures is imminent. No longer is there a through-service from London to Blackpool. In May, cities such as Lincoln and Grimsby will be removed from the railway map. In the meantime, a further £12bn is to be spent on the roads.

Railway transport could be cost-effective, safe and far less damaging to the environment. Every line closure and price increase affects first and foremost those who cannot afford a car - the unemployed, the poor, the old, especially if they live in small towns, or Lincoln or Grimsby. Railways are safer: whilst the number of road deaths fell below 5,000 in 1991 for the first time in over half a century, that for the railways has never been above double figures over the last ten years. Whilst railway routes are closed down, new roads are constantly opened. Quite apart from the 25 acres lost per motorway mile, there is the huge amount of pollutants poured into the atmosphere. In 1981, road transport pumped 76 million tons of carbon dioxide into the air, 800 thousand tons of nitrogen oxides and 4.2 million tons of carbon monoxide. By 1990, this had risen to 110 million tons of carbon dioxide, 1.4 million tons of nitrogen oxides and 6 million tons of carbon monoxide. Although railway usage rose slightly over the period, its contribution to pollution fell: to under 2 million tons of carbon dioxide, 30,000 tons of nitrogen oxides and 12,000 tons of carbon monoxide. The pollution contributed by railway transport is half as noxious as road transport per passenger mile.

There are now 20 million cars on



Branch lines will go under privatisation

The advent of the 1951 Conservative Government brought the denationalisation of road haulage firms, which had been taken into public ownership with the railways. This was a victory for the road lobby - the oil companies, the car manufacturers and construction firms which now started to flex their muscles. The railways were a direct threat to the interests of these emerging transnational corporations (TNCs), and they were now determined to ensure that it was their interests that decided transport policy.

The post-war boom provided the conditions in which these TNCs were able to prosper. The rapid development of productivity in the car industry allowed for a constant reduction in the real cost of the end product, whilst the post-war boom created an ever-increasing section of the middle

Shackled by the need to service the debt to the former private owners, British Railways' performance declined. In 1955 only 51 start-to-stop journeys were timed at 60 mph or more, compared to 116 in 1939. BR was slow and dirty, and the more affluent deserted it for their cars in droves. Losses continued to mount. In 1955, a Modernisation Plan was announced which envisaged the investment of £1,250m over 15 years. Half of this was to deal with the backlog of maintenance, the remainder for dieselisation and some electrification schemes. The Modernisation Plan, however, also envisaged 'a marked reduction in the stopping and branch line services which are little used by the public and which... should be largely handed over to road transport.' Two weeks later, the Government announced a four-year motor-



Mad car disease

in a 'social surplus' of £36m as opposed to costs of £17m. In other words, the 'uneconomic' railways were more cost-justifiable at a social level than the motorways!

Road lobby victories

The undermining continued. In 1971, the road lobby demanded 3,000 more miles of motorway, and got 2,000 miles plus 1,500 miles of dual carriageway. In that year, the road building programme cost £800m, whilst the annual subsidy to BR was £60m. In Germany, the rail subsidy was £700m; in France, £400m. And despite the power of the road lobby, the British car industry was in a state of collapse. The next Labour Government offered little more: £2.1bn support for BR between 1974-79, only £600m new investment.

Between 1981 and 1991, central

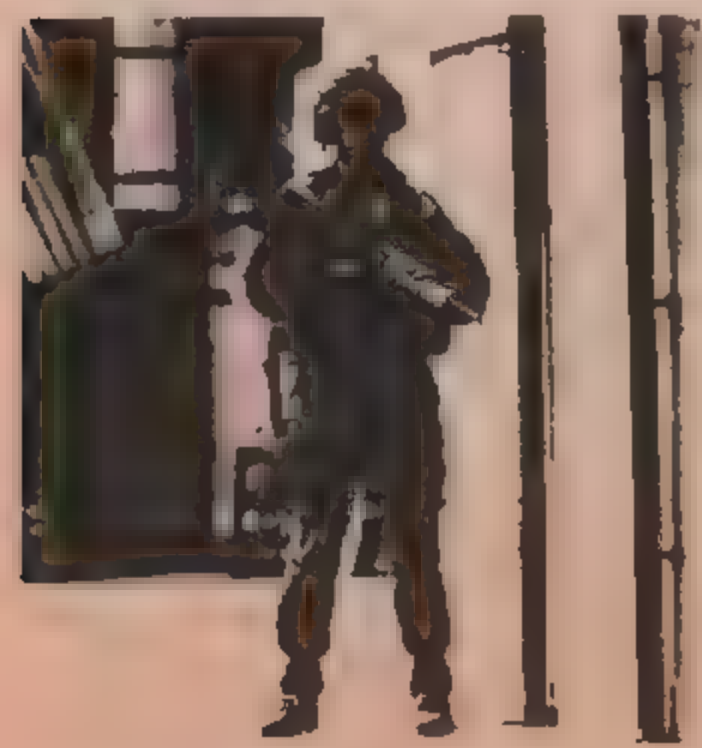
British roads. Along with house ownership a car is a symbol of the affluence of the middle class and better-off sections of the working class. It expresses their privileged consumption of the resources of the planet, and is their contribution to its environmental destruction. Between 1980 and 1990, average household expenditure on car purchase, maintenance and running costs rose 40 per cent in real terms; only those who benefitted from the years of Thatcherism could sustain this increasing level of expenditure, often dependent on easy credit. Railway privatisation has as its aim the closing down of further sections of the rail network to increase this dependency on the car, to ensure that for as long as possible it remains part of the normal consumption of better-off sections of the population. ■

Renewing the terror

CAROL BRICKLEY

On 10 March the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act was renewed by Parliament for another year. Next year the Act will be twenty years old. The inclusion in the title 'Temporary Provisions' is a fig leaf barely disguising the fact that the PTA is a permanent suspension of civil liberties.

The police and MI5 (now teamed up to fight 'terror' following deeply-felt Cabinet criticisms of police performance after the mortar-bombing of Downing Street) dutifully leaked the finding of a garage-full of semtex and a threat to blow up Buckingham Palace, timed to coincide with the renewal debate in Parliament. It was not really necessary. Parliament is so spineless that the merest vestige of criticism of the PTA from the Labour Party can be labelled 'support for terrorism'.



The real terrorism

When Roy Jenkins, the Labour Home Secretary in 1974, introduced the first PTA, he described its powers as draconian - banning of Republican organisations and their supporters, increased powers of arrest and detention, exclusion orders to ban Irish people from Great Britain. This was, he claimed, 'fully justified' to fight terrorism, so the Bill was rushed through Parliament in 24 hours, within a week of the Birmingham pub bombings. In fact the Act was never intended to prevent 'terrorism'; it was

meant to criminalise opposition to British rule in Ireland. The Act provides a thorough-going regime for the harassment of Irish people and anyone who supports the struggle for self-determination.

For the first nine years, the Labour Party whole-heartedly supported the Act's provisions. Since 1983 it has offered a

brought before a judge after four days (the time deemed suitable by the European Court of Human Rights). British judges have no record of upholding the civil liberties of detainees, so Labour's reform would hardly be a blow for justice. With the European Court for cover, Labour was not going to take any chances.



number of criticisms and refused to vote for renewal. These criticisms have always been timid, even in the face of overwhelming evidence that the Act and its surrounding provisions are used to intimidate and stifle political debate on Ireland. This year the criticisms were extra timid because the renewal of the Act coincided with Tony Blair's attempt to outbid the Tories for the 'law and order' vote. Labour, we are told, is opposed to exclusion orders which allow for the exile of British citizens to either the Six Counties or Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). Inevitably, given the purpose of the Act, these orders have been primarily used to ban Irish people from the mainland.

In opposing such orders, Labour is hardly sticking its neck out: every government-appointed review of the law has pointed to the iniquity of these provisions.

Labour is also opposed to seven-day detentions, but not because this allows the police to keep suspects for seven days incommunicado for interrogation, but because the detainees are not

Both exclusion orders and lengthy detentions are real iniquities, but the PTA provisions taken together are the means by which the civil rights of all British citizens are eroded. Thousands have been stopped and searched and routinely questioned at designated ports of entry between Ireland and Britain; the Irish community is daily harassed by police; Republican supporters are censored on television and in the media; people arrested under the PTA are routinely denied legal advice and face the prospect of framed charges; trials are conducted in an atmosphere of fear and violence promoted by visible armed police surrounding courts and searching relatives and public spectators; armed police and road blocks are now common on London streets. In such a climate, the British state hopes to censor and intimidate opposition to British rule in Ireland out of existence. What it will not do is solve the problem. Every clause of the PTA needs to be opposed, and after nineteen years no one can rely on Labour to do that.

an hour at Heathrow Airport when they entered Britain to attend the visit.

- Patrick Murphy, arrested in January by the Anti-Terrorist Squad and accused of an IRA bomb attack in Whitehall, was released on 24 February when the CPS offered no evidence against him and his alibi that he was at an Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting at the time was accepted.

- Liam Heffnan and Martin McMonagle were arrested and charged under the PTA and are now on remand in HMP Belmarsh.

- On 2 March two men were arrested and have been charged under the PTA after a raid on a flat in Stoke Newington. Eight other people were arrested on the same day; five were released the following day and the other three three days later, all with no charges brought against them.

Kilburn Defence Campaign

Janet Simmance and Kathleen Diver were arrested under the PTA along with seven others in Kilburn in November 1990. Both

women were held for 40 hours before being released without charge. This was despite the police's own admission that they were never suspected of anything. During their detention they were strip-searched and Janet was threatened with having her children taken into care if she did not co-operate with the police. Both Janet and Kathleen are now preparing to sue the police, for which they have won the support of Liberty. To support Kathleen and Janet contact the Kilburn Defence Campaign, c/o Liz Leicester, c/o Camden NALGO, Camden Town Hall Extension, Euston Road, London NW1.

US envoy to the Six Counties

The Irish-American electorate, whose vote for Clinton was won by pledges of a 'Peace Envoy' and support for the anti-discriminatory McBride Principles, chose the best moment to remind Clinton of these pledges as Major arrived in the US. Nonetheless, he has squirmed out of his pledge on the grounds of 'not interfering with the peace process'.

Pam Robinson

Cuban socialist democracy

ANDY HIGGINSBOTTOM

On 24 February 99.62% of all eligible Cubans over 16 exercised their right to vote in general elections to the provincial and national assemblies*. 315 of the 589 deputies elected to the National Assembly are national or provincial figures. 274 of the deputies had already been voted into the municipal assemblies in the elections of 20 December (see *FRFI* 111). Over 83% of the new deputies were first time candidates; their average age is 43.

This result was a resounding victory for People's Power. The objectives of rejuvenating the National Assembly as a representative legislature and strengthening direct grass roots involvement were achieved.

There were 200 foreign correspondents covering the election. Fidel Castro's campaigning speeches - a crowd of 10,000 people came to greet him in the Santiago de Cuba constituency - attracted the most publicity. Try as they might, the journalists could not fault the integrity of the election procedures. If there had been any irregularities they would have been broadcast worldwide by the hostile imperialist media. There were none found.

And yet hostility to the Cuban Revolution in imperialist countries is such that points of criticism had to be manufactured. The first fabrication, circulated in Britain by the Trotskyist *Workers Power* amongst others, is that 20-30% of Cubans registered their opposition to the elections. In fact the maximum possible 'protest vote' - no votes (0.4%) plus blank ballots (3.1%) plus spoiled ballots (3.9%) - was 7.4% nationally, although in Havana City blank ballots plus spoiled ballots did reach 14.8%.

The second point of criticism is that there was only one list of candidates. The bourgeois notion of a 'democratic' election is that anyone can put themselves forward and has an equal opportunity. The bourgeois reality is a capitalist competition that excludes the working class and oppressed. Only someone backed with stacks of money and a party machine will be elected to power. In capitalism the power of big money, to sell candidates and to buy votes, dominates both sides of the electoral equation just as it does all market mechanisms.

Turkish state moves to ban STP

Within three months of the foundation in November of the Party for a Socialist Turkey (STP) (see *FRFI* 111) the Turkish state is moving to ban it. Using legal niceties about the Constitution and the 'law for political parties' the bourgeoisie is attempting to ban the socialist politics of the STP. In particular, it is the STP's positions of support for the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination and for the joint struggle of Turkish and Kurdish workers for socialism which is intolerable to the Turkish ruling class.

In a press release the STP stated its defiance of this anti-democratic move, 'They claim

Socialist Cuba does not work that way. The candidate selection procedures were exhaustive and based on consultations in the mass organisations (trade unions, women, students, peasants) and in neighbourhood assemblies. 60,000-70,000 people had been considered as candidates. Over one and a half million Cubans personally participated in candidate selection meetings (1 in 5 of the whole adult population). The power of money to influence the outcome was completely removed from the process, which is the essential condition for a working class democracy.

But, Cuba's critics argue, why did the selection process produce a single slate of candidates? Because the elections took place in the context of special, 'virtually warlike' conditions our country is facing, given the U.S. blockade and the consequences of the demise of the socialist bloc'. The Communist Party is rightly determined to prevent any opening for imperialist interests to intervene in Cuba's domestic politics. That is why the Cubans chose not to have politicking and competition between the candidates.

Each individual candidate

had to achieve over 50% of the available votes to be elected. The mass organisations campaigned for a Yes vote for all the candidates, including the lesser known ones, as an endorsement of the selection process which had concentrated on finding candidate deputies with the necessary mix of qualities, to combine leadership with a good cross section of Cuban society. They argued that a vote for the slate was a vote for national unity, a vote against the blockade.

And so it was, 585 of the National Assembly candidates got over 90% of the possible votes, the remaining 4 got over 87%. 95.17% of all valid votes were cast for the whole slate.

The Cubans' evolving system is not perfect, but it works for the workers rather than against them. The elections are based on socialist combination to exclude the capitalists. As Ricardo Alarcon, Minister of Foreign Affairs and a successful candidate concludes,

'It would be very hard to find another example of such genuine public participation, which in the final analysis is the essence of democracy'.

* All figures from *Granma Internacional*



Education and Health in Cuba

Over 5,000 Latin American educators have participated in the Pedagogy 93 conference held in Havana.

There are today 10 times more university students than before the Revolution in 1959. Socialist Cuba taught 800,000 adults to read and write in one year.

Cuba, with 300,000 educators, has the highest teaching staff per capita ratio in the world. In Latin America there is one educator per 100 of the general population, in the US 1 per 77, in Canada 1 per 52, in Cuba 1 per 39. The average number of students per educator in underdeveloped countries is 26, in the rich capitalist countries there are 16, and in Cuba there are 10. Around 50% of students at-

tend elementary school in Latin America. In Cuba all children attend and more than 90% attain the finishing grade.

The Cuban state is now spending 20 times more on education than prior to the Revolution, and 50 times more on health.

There were 6,000 doctors in 1959, 3,000 of them left for the US, leaving 3,000. Today there are 18,000 family doctors and 40,000 doctors in all. Each pregnant Cuban woman receives 15 prenatal examinations. Despite the problems of the special period, infant mortality is falling and now stands at 10.2 per 1,000 births, lower than any other Third World country and in the lowest 25 in the world.

PERUVIAN MILITANT UNDER THREAT

The Peruvian government is attempting to extradite Adolfo Olaechea claiming he is an 'apologist' for the Sendero Luminoso. Adolfo, who has lived in London since 1984, is a leader of Sol Peru which works to expose the brutal anti-working class Peruvian government which has been condemned among others by Amnesty International. Sol Peru also builds support for forces fighting the Fujimori regime. By seeking Adolfo's extradition, the Peruvian government hopes to silence international opposition to its dictatorship.

We urge readers to write to the Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1 demanding it reject all extradition requests against Adolfo Olaechea.

IN BRIEFS

Irish trials and imprisonment in England

- Jimmy Canning was gaoled for 30 years on charges of conspiring to cause explosions, possession of semtex and possession of firearms. His partner, Audrey Lamb, was gaoled for 3 years on charges of possession of firearms and for providing Canning with money and other aid knowing it might be used for acts of terrorism.

- The trial has begun of Paul Magee and Michael O'Brien, who deny charges of murder, attempted murder and the possession of a rifle with intent to endanger life. The trial is set to continue for some time.

- On 4 March Tommy Quigley, an Irish POW, was 'ghosted' during a pre-arranged visit with his family. He was taken from Parkhurst to Full Sutton, a distance of 500 miles. Other Irish POWs at Parkhurst held a protest at his 'ghosting' and the harassment caused to his family. His two brothers were held for

Lonrho PREDATORY CAPITALISM

In 1961 when Angus Ogilvy invited Tiny Rowland onto the board of the London and Rhodesian Mining and Land Company it was a small beef ranching and mining outpost of the British Empire, in what was then Southern Rhodesia. Today, Lonrho operates some 700 subsidiary firms in 60 countries with a combined turnover that has grown from £4 million in 1961 to approximately £5 billion in 1992. Lonrho employs 137,000 people, more than BP and Royal Dutch Shell. TREVOR RAYNE continues his survey of multinationals with a sharp review of Lonrho.

The transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s provided the basis for Lonrho's growth. Lonrho spearheaded European capital's efforts to hold onto the riches of newly independent African nations. It bought, bribed and helped to create Africa's new ruling class, 'the elite'. It connived in coups and civil wars, usually in consultation with the British Foreign Office. It even brought its own private army to Africa. The firm is the largest British corporate investor in Africa.

Lonrho is now Africa's largest commercial food producer. Among its produce are sugar, cotton (Lonrho accounts for 55 per cent of Mozambique's crop), tea, coffee, wheat, wattle, tobacco and beans. The company ranches 120,000 head of cattle, chiefly in Kenya. It produces exotic plants and oyster mushrooms which, like the rest of its agricultural output, are destined for North European and North American markets. Lonrho's estates cover 1,875 square miles (an area somewhat larger than Kent) of Mauritius, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, Zaire, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Swaziland.

The African mineral interests include gold mines in Ghana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa and platinum and coal, also mined in South Africa. To these have been added oil and gas in Colombia and the USA. The Ashanti Goldfield in Ghana is the largest gold mine in the world outside of South Africa. Under Nkrumah it had been nationalised. After his removal from power in 1966, Lonrho swooped in; at least three miners were shot dead and 28 wounded, striking in opposition to Lonrho.

Africa's new parasitical 'elite' is invited to share the plunder. Lonrho is Africa's largest vehicle distributor with agencies for Mercedes Benz, Toyota, Rover, General Motors, Volkswagen, Audi, Mitsubishi, Fiat, Peugeot and Massey Ferguson. There are also luxury hotels in Ghana, Mozambique, Zambia and Kenya, including the Aberdare Country Club.

Profits made in Africa have been invested world-wide. The joint-venture Krupp Lonrho runs Europe's biggest bulk carrier shipping fleet. Lonrho owns the Metropole hotel chain, and *The Observer* newspaper. It prints 90 per cent of Britain's postage stamps and supplies stamps to 120 other countries. Lonrho also maintains significant finance and insurance concerns, including the Lloyd's brokerage firm, FE Wright.

When Chief Executive Tiny Rowland disembarks from his private jet at African airports he expects to be met by the local national president. He commands meetings with British government ministers. Travelling in his company are likely to be former heads of the CIA, former US Secretary of State Al Haig, Zionist intelligence officers, members of the British Royal family and generals from assorted African armies.

Central to Lonrho's African ventures has been South Africa. South Africans sit on Lonrho's board. By 1976 Lonrho had almost £400m invested in South

Africa, making it one of South Africa's largest finance houses. That year, the year of the Soweto risings, it made a 23 per cent rate of profit on South African investments and paid £45.9m to the apartheid regime in taxes. Lonrho bought into a South African gold mine in a joint-venture with Anglo-American and it owns Matrix Products, a South African arms producer. Currently, Rowland is considering allowing Gencor, South Africa's biggest mining house, to increase its 27 per cent stake in Lonrho's three platinum mines. This January Rowland hosted an ANC delegation at his London Metropole Hotel. They were seeking assistance with establishing an ANC daily newspaper.



Tiny Rowland

Rowland once described his fellow directors as decorations on a Christmas tree. He has placed them carefully. Early directors included former colonial administrators, then the African elite were appointed; for example, the head of Lonrho (Kenya) is President arap Moi's son. When oil prices rose in the early 1970s Lonrho sought to tap into the revenues by appointing the Al Fayed brothers. However, the most impressive appointees have been the illustrious Tories Duncan-Sandys and Edward du Cann.

Lord Duncan-Sandys served as Chairman in the early 1970s. He was Winston Churchill's son-in-law and a former Colonial Secretary, Commonwealth Secretary and Minister of Defence. For the kudos and connections he gave to Lonrho, Rowland paid him £100,000 a year tax free through the Cayman Islands. This was the affair Edward Heath dubbed the 'unpleasant and unacceptable face of capitalism'.

Sir Edward du Cann, former Conservative Party chairman and a financier, resigned the Chairmanship in 1991. The Department of Trade and Industry had announced that it intended to take him to court to debar him from directorships because of his record as director of the crashed mortgage company Homes Assured. Du Cann was instrumental in getting Thatcher elected to the Conservative Party leadership in 1975.

He was reportedly furious when

she did not make him a Cabinet minister in 1979. Rowland and Du Cann blamed Thatcher and Tebbit when the Al Fayed bought the House of Fraser (with Harrods) after Lonrho's own bid was blocked by the Monopolies Commission. Rowland was never one of Thatcher's inner circle of favourite directors.

Lonrho has been at the centre of some of Africa's bloodiest civil wars. While breaking sanctions against Smith's regime in Rhodesia, Rowland kept up contacts with ZAPU's Joshua Nkomo. He provided Savimbi with his personal jet to promote Unita's diplomatic effort in its war against the Angolan government. Lonrho even bought an airline to ferry arms to Unita. Rowland had his eye on a big contract for Angolan oil. In 1971 Rowland used his jet to bring generals back from Belgrade to lead the counter-coup which restored Numeiri to power in the Sudan. This resulted in the murder of many communists and their supporters. In February this year Rowland revealed that for the past nine years he has been a member of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement which is fighting the Sudanese government. Southern Sudan has rich oil reserves which Lonrho wants to pump through Kenya to Mombasa while the government intends to bring it north through a pipeline to the Red Sea port of Port Sudan.

Mozambique has been a particular focus for Lonrho's attentions; through it run routes critical for Lonrho's investments in Zimbabwe and Malawi. Lonrho employs 10,000 fieldworkers in Mozambique with a defence unit of 1,400 men. This private army, Defence Systems Limited, also trains the Mozambique army. Rowland maintains discreet contacts with Renamo.

Rowland's latest forays have been to Libya, which has bought into the Metropole Hotels, and to Iran, where he is reported to have visited with German financial interests intending to collaborate over Iranian oil distribution. Lonrho employs 500 workers in Russia.

This January Lonrho issued new shares which were deliberately overpriced so that the company could conform with the legal obligation to give existing shareholders first refusal while transferring the stock to the German financier Dieter Bock, who has now replaced Rowland as the biggest shareholder with an 18.8 per cent stake. Other major shareholders include the South African Mutual Life Assurance Society, Phillips and Drew Fund Management Limited and UBS (UK). Regardless of a 60 per cent drop in profits from 1991 to 1992, Rowland's salary rose from £1.6 million to £1.65 million for the year.

Tiny Rowland once described himself as a 'revolutionary capitalist'. In many ways his career personifies the destructive force of capitalism, building an empire ruled by the single-minded pursuit of profits.

ANC and regime reach deal on powersharing

Bilateral talks between the African National Congress and the regime in South Africa which began in September last year, have ended in agreement on elections for a constituent assembly and an Interim Government of national unity. Sections of the ANC have opposed the deal, but the leadership claims that there is a difference between 'powersharing' and, in Nelson Mandela's words, 'sharing of power'. On 5 March 26 parties attended a planning conference for multi-party talks to begin on 5 April. CAROL BRICKLEY reports.

The ANC/National Party deal is now familiar ground for those familiar with the progress of the Codesa (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) talks in 1992. Codesa was formed in December 1991 claiming to be the multi-party negotiating forum which would agree South Africa's future. In fact, major parties did not participate - in particular the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), Inkatha and AZAPO - on the grounds that the forum was undemocratic.

Codesa talks broke down in May 1992, but since September and the debacle of the Bisho massacre, the ANC has been attempting to renew them, this time preceded by bilateral agreements with the regime. This is perceived by many as an attempt to bind multi-party talks before they even begin. The apparently decisive influence behind the ANC's renewed push for talks was a document written by ex-communist Joe Slovo advocating a programme of powersharing and a 'sunset clause' which would protect elements of the existing state, like civil servants.

In February the ANC and the regime achieved agreement, the extent of which is still unknown. Certain things are clear. The two parties have agreed elections for a constituent assembly. As a result of the elections, parties with more than a set minimum of the vote will take part in an Interim Government of national unity which will rule for five years. In the lead up to elections a Transitional Executive will rule, but it is not clear what powers it will have. The ANC would like it to have power over security forces and electoral matters; the regime would like its role to be consultative only.

Following the bilateral agreement the ANC National Executive set about defusing opposition in its ranks by declaring itself in favour of a government of national unity of 'limited duration', 'sharing power', not powersharing. This was perceived as a semantic exercise.

There is major opposition to the deal. The ANC leadership has been subject to renewed criticism from Winnie Mandela for the elitism of its leadership. Other criticisms have appeared in the South African press recording luxury lifestyles courtesy of Tiny Rowland, private schools for children and expensive clothes. Most of the ANC leadership lives in privileged white areas. Significant opposition has come from Harry Gwala, leader of the Natal ANC and SACP, who has called for an ANC conference to review the deal.

There is also a major disagreement between the regime and the ANC on the character of the Interim Government. The ANC sees the majority party with unfettered control on certain, as yet unspecified, issues. The regime would like government by 'consensus' thus reserving a minority veto for itself.

The multi-party talks are due to

start on 5 April; a planning conference was held on 5 March. In the lead up to this, both the ANC and National Party attempted to bolster their respective positions by including other parties in the multi-party talks. This was essential since the absence of major parties like Inkatha, PAC and AZAPO would scupper the negotiations process.

In 1992 the PAC had begun bilateral talks with the regime, outside the country and under a neutral chair, but they were halted in December after the Azanian People's Liberation Army's armed attacks on whites in King Williamstown and Queenstown. APLA is the PAC's armed wing. The regime maintained that it would not talk to the PAC until it had denounced APLA and the armed struggle. Despite the fact that the PAC repeatedly refused to do this, the government made several attempts to renew secret talks, all of which were rebuffed. In February, however, a meeting was held, publicly, in Gaborone at which the regime made it clear that the price of an invitation to the multi-party talks would be the PAC's renunciation of the armed struggle. The PAC refused yet again and stated that it was not the regime's prerogative to issue invitations to the talks. The PAC attended the planning conference on 5 March regardless of the regime's threats.

Twenty six parties attended the planning meeting, including Inkatha. AZAPO has continued to refuse to attend on the grounds that the liberation movements should first of all form a united Patriotic Front. Talks have been held between the ANC, PAC and AZAPO in the last week towards this end.

The negotiations have taken place against a background of further revelations of the regime's complicity in murder. Last year Transkei leader General Holomisa released secret documents showing that senior military officers and cabinet members were involved in plans to murder ANC member Matthew Goniwe and three others in 1985. Within two weeks of the order for Goniwe's 'permanent removal', he was shot dead with his comrades. The leaks forced de Klerk to order a Supreme Court Inquest which is currently taking place. Senior officers have testified at the inquest that 'permanent removal' meant long-term detention not murder. Infuriated by this farrago of lies General Holomisa has released further documents (he says he has another twelve). The documents show that 'permanent removal' meant murder and also implicated President de Klerk. 'Permanent removal' was also recommended for Lennox Sebe, puppet leader of the Ciskei, who was out of favour at the time.

If there was ever any doubt, it is now clear that whoever settles for power sharing, will be 'sharing power' with a bunch of murderers.

Strangeways trial farce

The second Strangeways trial is over and, as in the first one, heavy sentences have been handed down to those convicted. The gaol terms imposed range from four to ten years and yet again we had the spectacle of a judge *totally* dismissing the conclusions of the Woolf Report: namely, that the 'riot' started as a 'limited protest' against conditions that were 'unacceptable and inhumane'. Ex-prisoner ERIC ALLISON reports.

In this instance, the judge practically gloated when he sentenced; he spoke of the protesters having had their moments of 'power and arrogance' for which they must now pay. (And what diseased hypocrisy this is - for a judge to talk of prisoners wielding arrogance and power!)

It was made clear, from the very start of the trial, in which camp His Honour, Judge Sachs, resided. A day or so into the proceedings at Manchester Crown Court, John Riley, counsel for John Murray, complained that his client was being subjected to both 'physical abuse and psychological torture' at Armley gaol, where some of the defendants were being held at weekends and to where, as it so happened, many of the Manchester screws had been seconded following the protest. Riley asked Sachs to order that John should not be returned to Armley but Sachs replied that he had 'no power to do so'. He had the power all right - as they all do (and the arrogance that goes with such power) but he, and they, only choose to use it when it suits them. Given that Sachs was clearly biased - and that the proceedings smacked more of persecution than prosecution - there is little point in

going into too much detail about the trial. For what it is worth however, the Crown's case was thin in the extreme. It relied mainly on video evidence that those accused were actually on the roof during the protest - which of course was not denied - and testimony from screws who, though being unable to identify the 'ringleaders' at the first time of asking (hours after the disturbance ended, but too soon to know the names of those who would eventually be picked out as scapegoats), were now able to recall with blinding clarity that those who just happened to be in the dock also just happened to be the particular prisoners who had 'jointly agreed' (the nub of the wretched conspiracy laws under which these lads were charged) to hurl slates and other missiles at the screws who surrounded the prison, with the intention of causing them Grievous Bodily Harm.

But I repeat, there is little point in assessing the evidence. It is clear to this observer that those in the dock had no chance from the off. The powers-that-be had clearly decided that the accused (and the ones before them, and the ones yet to come) must pay for being the catalyst which exposed their stinking system. Never



mind the Prison Department which oversaw and approved of the rotten conditions; never mind the bullies in uniform who exacerbated the appalling physical environment in piss-holes such as Strangeways with their abuse of power. It had clearly been decreed that only those on the receiving end of the rotten structure must pay. 'Arrogance and power' indeed!

The media played their part in the charade - by taking no part. With the exceptions that is of the two 'newsworthy' aspects of the trial: a) yet again, the lurid tales of horror from the prosecution's opening speech and b) the 'great escapes' (Mark I and II). And, depressingly, yet again, I did not hear or read a single word of condemnation at this naked act of revenge from the recognised prison reform groups: these worthies rail against bad conditions but fail to support those who were driven by those conditions to protest.

Those sentenced will be spread around the system and the system will, no doubt, do its best to abuse them. All progressive people (both inside and out) should support these

men. We should recognise them as martyrs and I urge all prisoners, and those who genuinely support them, to remember that any improvements in conditions which are taking place - and may yet take place - came about *solely* as a result of the actions of those who had had enough of the shit that was their daily lot. We should salute those whose bravery caused the change. ■

The sentences

Alan Lord - 10 years; Kevin Gee - 10 years; Glyn Williams - 10 years; Tony Bush - 9 years; David Bowen - 9 years; Barry Morton - 8 years; Mark Williams - 8 years; Mark Azzopardi - 8 years; Nathan Gaynor - 7 years; John Murray - 4 years. Darren Jones and Andrew Nelson were acquitted; Nelson for the second time. During the course of the trial six prisoners escaped, one of them twice: Alan Lord, Barry Morton and Mark Azzopardi have all now been recaptured although John Murray, Tony Bush and David Bowen are still on the run. All six were absent when sentence was passed; Mark Williams fell ill during the trial and only five prisoners were in court to hear the verdicts and sentences. The trial cost £2 million. Another 27 prisoners are still awaiting trial.

Another example of British injustice

John McGranaghan's forthcoming trial for GBH against a prison officer starkly demonstrates the sheer vindictiveness of which 'British justice' is capable.

John McGranaghan was convicted of multiple rape in July 1981. He was released by the Court of Appeal ten years later in October 1991, conclusively cleared of all charges by forensic evidence. He had spent 11 years in Britain's worst gaols, categorised and stigmatised as a sex offender and treated accordingly, subject to constant victimisation and cruelty.

John did not take his false imprisonment lying down and fought vigorously for his survival. He spent over eight years in solitary in the 'interests of good order and discipline' and was moved between gaols 30 times. He struggled constantly both to prove his innocence and to defend his human rights. He was involved in a number of collective protests to highlight conditions in the special control units at Lincoln and Hull. He was punished particularly harshly because of his alleged offence and had to cope not just with staff brutality but with the constant attempts to turn other prisoners against him and set him up for beatings. This climate of psychological terror came to a head in Gartree in 1991 where prison officers were constantly inciting other prisoners to ostracise John and physically attack him. John defended himself against a prison officer and was charged with GBH.

When John was released, the Appeal Court judge said the case was a 'clear miscarriage of justice'; however the GBH case has not been dropped and John appears in Leicester Crown Court on 5 April.



Is 11 years imprisonment for something he did not do not enough? Since his release John has suffered a stress-related heart attack. What will they do if he is found guilty of this charge? Return him to prison?

John intends to use his trial to highlight the way he was treated in gaol and will bring evidence to back up his contention that he acted in self defence against a prison system that was actively seeking to destroy him both physically and mentally. He is asking people who support the stand he is taking to turn up to court on the day and pack the public gallery. Unless the state is made aware that people are concerned, John may yet be returned to prison to serve another unjust sentence.

Nick Jameson

Letter from a Belgian gaol

During summer 1992 two young people savagely killed a young man and his girlfriend, after having raped her and committed several other acts of aggression. One of the two had been on parole for a few months and the other was on one day's leave from gaol. There was high media attention and a petition of 300,000 signatures presented to parliament by the victims' families resulting in an immediate hardening of public opinion about Belgian prisons and prisoners. This has been made felt in the almost systematic denial of all subsequent requests for parole or day's home leave.

In December we decided, against this background, to assert and define our political militancy in a new way.

POWs' birthdays

Martina Anderson D25134

HMP Durham, Old Elvet,
Durham DH1 3HU

16 April

Eddie Butler 33867

HMP Full Sutton, York YO4 1PS

17 April

Patrick McLaughlin LB83694

HMP Whitmoor, Longhill Road,
March, Cambridge PE15 0PR

2 May

As revolutionaries we decided to stop according even the tiny bit of trust remaining in us to the system ruling the Belgian gaols. This new definition of militancy expressed itself firstly in a plan to escape and secondly in an all-out struggle against all the government's repressive institutions. We won't explain in detail our escape, which failed after more than a month digging a hole with sweat and blood, but we'd like to tell you about our current situation.

We are framed and have served seven and a half years out of an 18 year sentence in one case and 12 out of 15 in the other. Theoretically we could be paroled but we are always refused.

For our escape we have been placed in a punishment cell and we are now in a maximum security unit, but the struggle continues!

Once more the repressive system in Belgium shows us its real face as a part of how the next decade will be throughout Europe; as revolutionary fighters we have to unify against it. For the victory of our struggle; never give up trying, shouting, rioting! Solidarity with all comrades framed in imperialist gaols!

Boris Dumont and Serge Mandelier
Prison de Verviers
81 Chaussee d'Heusy, 4800 Verviers,
Belgium.

INSIDE NEWS

Free Frank Johnson!

In 1976 Frank Johnson was sentenced to life imprisonment for the alleged murder of his employer, John Sheridan, who died after being doused in petrol in his shop in east London. Frank's conviction was based almost entirely on the testimony of his two co-defendants: David Smart, an ex-soldier who admitted throwing the petrol and Jack Tierney who was later exposed as a police informer and agent provocateur, instrumental in the attempted frame-up of members of the Angry Brigade in the early 1970s.

Latching onto the fact that both Johnson and Sheridan were Irish, the media tried to create an 'IRA angle' and imply that Sheridan had been killed because he refused to pay money to racketeers. However the prosecution cited the motive as robbery.

Frank Johnson has always denied killing a man who was both employer and friend and indeed insists, as was reported at the time of the murder, that he tried to save the shopkeeper's life by dousing the flames. As in the case of many innocent prisoners, the parole board do not look kindly on his application, seeing the continued protestation of innocence as a refusal to come to terms with the crime.

Support Frank Johnson by writing to him at HMP Swaleside, Eastchurch, Kent, ME12 4AX and contacting the Free Frank Johnson Campaign, c/o 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7.

New control unit

Prisoners beware! Before you apply to be located in the new 'special unit' at Wood Hill prison, Milton Keynes Word has it the regime is very much based on control. The unit opened on 1 February, currently houses only four prisoners and there has already been one enforced deselection and one voluntary one! Like the Lincoln and Hull units before it, it will take concerted struggle by prisoners before the regime at Wood Hill delivers any of its liberal claims.

New trial in police station murder

A new trial has been granted to Malcolm Kennedy, sentenced to life in 1991 for the murder of a man he had never met before in a cell at Hamersmith police station. There is a very strong case that the police fabricated evidence against Kennedy and new witnesses have been tracked down by investigative journalists from Granada's *World in Action* programme.

Privatisation

The full text of the four articles on prison privatisation which appeared in the last three issues of *FRFI* is available in a short pamphlet, price £1 plus 30p p&p from Larkin Publications, BCM 5909, London, WC1N 3XX. Copies are free to prisoners.

Death in Pentonville

The High Court has ruled against a coroner who told an inquest jury it could not return a verdict of unlawful killing on Omasse Lumumba, a nephew of the first Zairean President, Patrice Lumumba. Omasse Lumumba died in a bare cell in Pentonville in October 1991. He had been arrested on suspicion of stealing a bicycle and assault but no charges were brought against him; however he was taken to Pentonville pending a decision on his application for political asylum.

Pentonville has a gruesome, though little publicised record of deaths in custody. Two young men were found dead in one weekend alone in March 1992.

Free the Bridgewater 4!

While a Royal Commission deliberates on 'miscarriages of justice', an estimated 700 innocent men and women continue to languish in British gaols. The case of the Bridgewater 4 has been well-documented over the years but the state has not yet been forced into overturning the convictions of the four men gaoled in 1979. Pat Molloy died in Gartree prison in 1981, two years into a 12 year sentence; Michael Hickey, Vincent Hickey and James Robinson are now in the 14th year of life sentences with minimum recommendations of 25 years.

On 3 February 1992 Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke refused to refer the case back to the Court of Appeal, callously making his announcement to inform the media before the prisoners, their families or their lawyers.

Since 23 February Jim Robinson has been protesting his innocence on the roof of Gartree prison. He has the support of many other prisoners in the gaol, including those who themselves are victims of frame-ups: Winston Silcott, Tony Poole, Gary Mills, Raphael Rowe and Jimmy Ingram who has now joined him on the roof. On behalf of FRFI, CHAS NEWKEY-BURDEN spoke to Jim Robinson's wife, Teresa:

When the Cardiff 3 were released, did you think the Bridgewater 4 would be next? No, I don't think I thought about it in that light at all. At that time we'd been waiting about 18 months for the Home Secretary to decide whether to refer us back to the Court of Appeal and, if anything, the release of the Cardiff 3, although welcome, just compounded our frustration at having to wait so long for a decision to be even made. In the last couple of years when people have been released we've never felt, 'Why wasn't it us in-

to the legal system. Given the economic climate, the total lack of leadership within the Tory Party, the huge questions of health, education, unemployment etc and, working on the basis that the legal system and the government are so inextricably bound together, it would have been a disastrous time for them to give us a hearing. You also have to bear in mind that Kenneth Clarke had to make his announcement at a time when he was also desperately trying to restore police morale and public confidence in the police.

have enormous support in all three fields and they are doing all they can within the confines they have to work in and in the way they know and do best and we have to trust to that. And families, friends, supporters are the like the foot soldiers, the grass roots and it's our job to go on speaking at public meetings, making more and more people aware not just of our case but of others, of which there are many.

What sort of solidarity has there been from other prisoners for Jim's protest and the campaign in general?

For years there has never been any doubt from prisoners and most officers alike of Jim's innocence. In terms of the protest there has been extraordinary support from the other prisoners. Jim hasn't eaten so well in years! They've given him tins of fish, fresh fruit, 'home made' stews, flasks of soup; all of which are hard to come by. Also coats and blankets, grease for his face to keep the wind out, anti-septic cream for his hands which are very sore. And they will convey messages in one form or another so we know when Jim's alright and when he's not and all this at risk of being shipped out or punished.

I gather that since Jim was joined by a second prisoner up there Gartree has drafted in more officers, stopped all work-outs in the gym and any work activities. Those decisions will have been made by the Home Office, not the governor, in an attempt to discourage the prisoners from helping the two of them and effectively starve them down.

What would you like readers to do to support the campaign?

Write to their MPs. Organise meetings within their trade unions - we can provide speakers; such meetings don't have to be specifically about us but can have a broader scope about justice or the legal system.

Write to the men and give them your support:

Michael Hickey, Ashworth North Hospital, Maghull, Liverpool, L31 1HW; Vincent Hickey C15440, HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX; Jim Robinson C15482, HMP Gartree, Market Harborough, Leics LE16 7RP.

Send donations; we desperately need money. It doesn't matter how little; our postage, photocopying and travel expenses are huge. Make cheques payable to the **Bridgewater Four Campaign** and send to 92a Farleigh Road, London N16 7TQ.



Jim Robinson on the roof of Gartree

stead of them?' Not ever. But what we have felt is, 'Why isn't it us as well as them?' which is quite different. 1978 is a long time ago and its only human to hurt and feel that we're being continually pushed to the back of the queue. It's nobody's fault and you can't say people have pushed to the front and should wait their turn - that would be ridiculous. But you can't help feeling it.

What was your reaction when you heard of Clarke's decision? Shock. Complete shock. Of course we knew that Clarke could make the decision he did - and I suppose about 20% of me felt that he might (and 80% firmly believed he wouldn't dare) - but none of us were prepared for the sheer callousness of the man in the way he announced it. And I had expected him to at least have read the petition we placed before the previous Home Secretary in June 1991 but from his letter to our solicitor and from his press release it was quite clear he hadn't.

Why do you think the authorities seem to have 'shut the gates' now?

They couldn't afford to let us out. They couldn't afford another massive embarrassment

What are you and other relatives and the campaign doing now to highlight the case and reverse the decision?

We can't 'reverse' the decision. Clarke isn't going to turn around and say 'I'm sorry; I made a mistake; you can go back to the Court of Appeal after all. I was just having a bad day.' What we can do is give the Home Office an opportunity of reconsidering, ie make it easier for them to reconsider without losing face.

We have to come up with more fresh evidence. You can't be referred back to the Court of Appeal on a whim and, although it is becoming almost impossible now as there is so little 'evidence' left against the men we just have to keep digging it up. Our solicitor is interviewing several new witnesses who in isolation don't perhaps add up to much but put like pieces of a jigsaw into the whole puzzle are worth a lot.

In term's of the campaign's direction, I think its important to look at different sections of the campaign as different aspects of a war. If the MPs represent the Navy, the positive and thinking lawyers the Air Force and the quality press the Infantry - I know it sounds a startling analogy but to take it further - we

REVIEWS

Malcolm X iconised

'During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes meted out to them constant persecution, received their teaching with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaign of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonise them, so to say, and to surround their names with a certain halo for the consolation of the oppressed classes and in order to dupe the latter, while at the same time emasculating the content of the revolutionary teaching, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarising it.' Lenin, *State and Revolution*

'X' T-shirts, baseball caps, posters, crisps and even car fresheners hailed the appearance of *Malcolm X*, a film surrounded by controversy right from its inception. Issues of directorship, length, Hollywood racism, budget, funding and content all combined to make the appearance of the film at all a victory in itself.

Malcolm X is full of colour and exuberance: Spike Lee's skill as a director cannot be doubted. But beyond that, there is a yawning gulf, a gut feeling of disappointment, of an opportunity which was simply too vital and too valuable having been squandered in the interests of commercialisation and political enervation.

Much hype preceded the film. Spike Lee himself emphasised its inflammatory potential. It was to be a film which spoke to and for Black America, as Malcolm X had. It was to open with footage of the Rodney King beating to demonstrate Malcolm's continuing relevance; it was to

present 'all the different Malcolms as making up one Malcolm'; it was to dispel certain myths.

But if the film dispelled certain myths, it created others: that Malcolm X split from the Nation of Islam because its leader Elijah Mohammed had shockingly seduced two young and vulnerable women and then abandoned them pregnant; in showing that the mature Malcolm X was not a preacher of race-hate, the film misleadingly portrays him as a man whose sacred trip to Mecca had



converted him to Sunni Islam and convinced him to embrace whites into a vision of a better future.

Such myths do no justice to Malcolm X. They are given credence only because Spike Lee makes no real effort to address Malcolm X's politics. Malcolm's break with the Nation of Islam was political as well as personal: his changing perspective on the black and white relation cannot be understood without reference to his increasing focus on anti-imperialism and his growing awareness of the

issue of class oppression. Yes, Malcolm X went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but he also attended - and spoke at length at - an Organisation of African Unity conference in Cairo, during which he met many African revolutionaries including 'very pale skinned' Algerians.

The lack of political context in which to place Malcolm X is the pattern of the entire film, not just the difficult last year. Even as fiery Black Muslim minister we hear Malcolm X's politics only briefly: his speeches are curtailed; clapping or cheering often obscures his words; and we are impressed only that he had a particular and almost peculiar dislike for the 'blue-eyed devil' and the 'Uncle Tom' leaders of the NAACP. The basis of this dislike - as relevant today as then - is not explored.

This, for me, was the film's greatest failing and does Black America - albeit not the minority black middle class of which Spike Lee is a part - the greatest disservice. Yes, it is to be welcomed that an important debate on Malcolm X has been initiated, that the autobiography has been the No. 1 bestseller in the US for over two months, but Spike Lee's film has ignored the interests of the very audience Malcolm X spoke for and addressed. Malcolm X was the product of a certain social context, one that still prevails today, one of racist and imperialist oppression. To limit the full significance of that is to limit the influence the essence of Malcolm X could have today, an influence perhaps unwanted by the black middle classes (too inflammatory?) but what of the majority black population?

Chris James

Vietnam - the real story

This review begins an occasional series on books which have become classics of their kind, and deserve to be more widely known and read.

There have been so many bad films made and bad books written about the Vietnam War that the United States has been able to virtually re-write the history of the period, portraying itself as the defender of democracy and encouraging the audience to sympathise with the US serviceman. It is worth remembering that during the course of the war the US dropped more bombs on Vietnam than were dropped during the entire Second World War. General Curtis Le May threatened to bomb North Vietnam back to the Stone Age, and towns and cities were literally wiped off the map. Yet in Hollywood's counterfeit history, we are called upon to sympathise with the US pilots and soldiers who carried out this mass destruction.

The Tunnels of Cu Chi by Tom Mangold and John Pennycate breaks this mould. The authors interview the Vietnamese who actually built and fought in the tunnel systems that the US military found so perplexing: for a long time the US army could not understand how the People's Liberation Army (PLA) regularly shelled the US bases at night with field guns, which seemed to disappear completely by daybreak. It was only after the



discovery and painfully slow exploration of the tunnel systems dug by the PLA that they realised the guns had been kept in pieces underground by day and brought to the surface to be re-assembled by night. In addition, they found printing presses, makeshift hospitals and in one instance an ARVN tank which had disappeared several years before and had been buried by the PLA and used as a command centre.

The district of the Cu Chi became the most bombed, shelled, gassed and defoliated area in the history of the warfare, but still the Vietnamese - including a high proportion of women guerrillas - fought on from their underground bases. The dying words of US Lieutenant George

Eyster, mortally wounded during a military operation in the Cu Chi district, were: 'Before I go I'd like to talk to the guy who controls those incredible men in the tunnels.'

The Tunnels of Cu Chi documents the ingenuity, determination and courage with which the PLA managed to survive underground and emerge to take the war to the Americans, a war which they eventually won. Although originally published in 1985, it remains by far the best book written to date about the Vietnam War. Do read it. You won't be disappointed.

The Tunnels of Cu Chi by Tom Mangold and John Pennycate is available in paperback from Pan Books.

Peter Cadle

FRFI Meetings

North London FRFI will be discussing the major feature articles in this issue of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* above the Advice Centre, Greenland Road, Camden Town NW1 (2 mins walks from Camden tube) on the following dates:

Tuesday 30 March, 7.30pm
CRISIS IN THE NHS:
A HEALTH WORKER SPEAKS OUT
Tuesday 20 April, 7.30pm
MADE IN BRITAIN:
THE DECLINE OF BRITISH INDUSTRY
For details tel: 071 837 1688

CITY AA PARTY

Saturday 3 April
Come and celebrate the 80th birthday of anti-apartheid activist and lifelong communist Rene Waller. 8pm onwards at the Locomotive, Jamestown Road, Camden NW1 £4/2
All proceeds to City AA

May Day Spectacular!

Celebrate the communist tradition at the
FRFI May Day Spectacular
Saturday 1 May, 7.30pm
onwards at the Old Farmhouse, Kentish Town NW1. Great cabaret, food, music and revolutionary politics. £5/£3.

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LETTERS Write to FRFI BCM Box 5909, London, WC1N 3XX

Anti-imperialism and anti-Sovietism

In response to Ted Talbot's letter, 'Anti-Sovietism is pro-imperialism' in *FRFI* 111, the following points need to be made:

1. To make anti-Sovietism a disqualification from membership of the revolutionary movement is anachronistic and question-begging. I am not disputing that for as long as the USSR existed as a socialist country, it was an obligation for workers and oppressed people to defend it without conditions. But the USSR ceased to exist as such with the Yeltsin counter-coup in August 1991. For the Workers' World Party it meant support for the Emergency Committee. For communists it meant intransigent working class opposition to all three factions, all of which were capitalist restorationist. As to Gorbachev and Yeltsin, the point needs no proof; as to the Emergency Committee, it lacked any popular base or social vision,

and its manifesto - permeated with Russian chauvinism, devoid of any reference to socialism, communism or anti-imperialism that might have made the coup supportable - was sufficiently compatible with Yeltsin's programme to invite suspicions that the coup was a 'conservative' Yeltsinite plot to open the gate for capitalist restoration (on this see Eddie Abraham's article in the October/November 1991 issue of *FRFI*, reproduced in *The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution*). Which version of Soviet defencism Ted supports, and whether he regards his particular version as a litmus test, is unstated in his letter.

2. It is far from the case that all formations calling themselves pro-Soviet are in any sense revolutionary. The former CPGB's *Morning Star* wing has always maintained a formal pro-Soviet stance coupled with the grossest adaptation in practice to the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy - nowhere more clearly shown than on the Irish question. For more than half a

century the main influence on the CPGB was not Soviet advice but the labour aristocracy of which it was a subordinate section. The same holds good for the French and Portuguese CPs.

3. But the grossest distortion in Ted's letter is to imply that all anti-Soviet left currents are identical. But the truth, as Lenin said, is always concrete. The British SWP devised the theory of state capitalism at the height of the Cold War in order to provide a 'Marxist' cover for abandoning Soviet defencism and to adapt to petit bourgeois opinion and the British labour aristocracy. Ted tries hard to prove that the anti-Sovietism of the Maoists is of this type. He refers to a couple of articles in *A World to Win* about Cuba - and the articles are scurrilous, that is for sure - but Ted does not tell us it is mutual: for example, a *Granma* article in 1989 described the PCP (Communist Party of Peru) as 'Sendero Vergonzoso' (Shameful Path). What I find alarming about his discussion of the Maoist position is that as he has read *A*

World to Win he knows who the RIM's sections are, yet the only one he quotes is the RCP(US) which would convince anyone who's never read *A World to Win* that this section in the world's main imperialist country is the RIM's biggest section! In fact, let us be clear, the PCP is many times bigger than all the others put together - and it is leading what is perhaps the most advanced revolutionary struggle in the world today. The red flag that flies over one third of Peru is our flag.

Also, it should be obvious that the anti-Sovietism of the RIM, while deplorable, has objective causes. In the case of the PCP, the only section that matters, it clearly was not concocted in order to gain favour with the petit bourgeoisie or labour aristocracy, but as an all-too-human response to Soviet military aid to the succession of US puppet regimes in Peru - in sharp contrast to Soviet support to the PCP (through the Communist International) at the time of its foundation by Mariategui in 1928.

It might be added that within the framework of a mass Communist International, it would be possible and desirable to educate the PCP/RIM out of its imbecilic anti-Soviet and anti-Cuba stance. The trouble is that such an organisation does not exist and we cannot ask any organisation - let alone one whose practical record puts the entire British left's to shame - to subordinate itself to the discipline of a non-existent organisation. I am indebted on this point to your newspaper's position on the PAC: in fact Ted's letter is an implicit criticism of all the interviews the paper has ever run with the PAC. Originally, I was opposed to the RCG's line on the PAC, and came over to it only gradually, and the compelling arguments in favour of supporting the PAC, a significant but by no means leading force in the South African liberation struggle, apply with incomparably greater force for the PCP, which clearly does lead the liberation struggle in Peru. MIKE WEBBER Aylesbury

From the heartland of imperialism

I have received the latest issue of *FRFI*, so was able to see how you edited my article on the privatisation debate. I thought you did an okay job on it. The opening quote by John Bowden was supposed to set the tone of the piece, so to some extent I missed that, but otherwise it was just fine.

Both Paul [Wright] and I have a great deal of respect for all the work you all do at *FRFI*. The news and analysis is outstanding. The best in the world as far as I can see, and I read a lot of international publications. If there is anything else we can do to be more supportive or a greater part of your efforts, just let me know. We can do such things as write articles and maybe provide you with some contacts over here in the heartland of international imperialism.

On the news side of things, not too much is happening. We have a new president, and all the liberals are experiencing a sense of optimism for the healthy survival of capitalism. Closer to where we live, a federal court has just handed down an order overturning a consent decree mandating single-celling, which means that by the time you get this we will have been subjected to involuntary double bunking. We've been fighting against this for ten years, and it may be that we'll ultimately prevail. But in the short term it looks pretty bleak. Oh well, I guess it provides us with another level of struggle to engage in.

ED MEAD
Washington State Reformatory, PO Box 777 (C-4-29), Monroe, Washington 98272, USA



Tony Benn et al, take note!

I notice you offer in *Counterattack* 2 a history of the Labour Party which coincides with my own conclusion that after 55 years of political activity in 'the good old cause' that the 'Labour Party' is a misnomer. At least in Kirkcaldy the belly-crawling and privileged sections of the working class who cowed to teachers etc and what they thought were their betters alongside the career-seeking middle class, made up the Labour Party, or its right-wing which has triumphed in local and national government representation.

Its exposure is the necessary prerequisite for any socialist advance here or anywhere else in the industrial world. Those on the left who attempt to transform it have failed miserably, and as long as they remain in it they are only bolstering the illusion that the Labour Party can represent the working class - Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, A Scargill, please note... JOHN P MATHIESON Fife, Scotland

300 march to save hospital

On 13 March 300 marchers joined a demonstration organised by Sutton Trades Council and the local Labour Party. The main focus was the threatened closure of Queen Mary's Children's Hospital, but it was also an opportunity to highlight the battles against deregulation and privatisation of London buses and against pit closures.

With warm support from Saturday shoppers, we marched through the High Street to Sutton Green to a public meeting, which I chaired on behalf of Sutton Trades Council, calling on all

workers to unite to halt privatisation and de-industrialisation, and force a change in the acquiescence of the Labour Party and Trade Union leadership. The theme was taken up by other speakers, who included Jeremy Corbyn, a representative from Health Emergency and union officials from the local bus garage and from the TGWU. A warm welcome was extended to Maggie Marrisotti from Women against Pit Closures, who launched a scathing attack on the Labour and trade union leadership and warned against a repeat of 1984/85. M. MURTAGH Sutton

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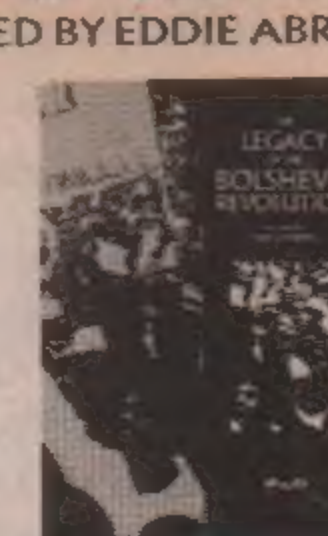
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CUBA EMERGENCY APPEAL

Cuba has launched an emergency appeal for money, food and medical aid to offset the devastating effect of recent storms, which are thought to have affected 150,000 people. The campaign to raise support in Britain has been initiated by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign who can be contacted c/o The Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, N7 for further details.

FRFI Readership Survey

FRFI is currently running a survey of its readership. Whether you receive *FRFI* on subscription, buy it regularly or occasionally, or are reading it now for the first time, we would like some feedback from you as to what issues you find of particular interest, and would like to see given more coverage.

Please indicate your views on the form below.

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FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

INDIA

A reign of terror



During a period of two and a half hours nearly 300 were killed and over 1,200 injured in blasts throughout Bombay

On 6 December 1992, the Babri Mosque in the North Indian town of Ayodhya was destroyed. The destruction was carried out by well-trained young men in the 200,000-strong crowd amassed at the site. This huge gathering and the subsequent destruction had been orchestrated by a number of Hindu-chauvinist organisations – the BJP, the RSS, the VHP, Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena ... All of these organisations share the use of religious and ethnic tensions – which they themselves have created – as major political tools.

After the destruction 'riots' broke out across the country, riots which often enough took the form of Muslim crowds demonstrating in protest and being shot down by the police. Bombay, which had not previously experienced such intense communal violence, was badly affected. After thousands across India had died, and many more were left homeless, bereaved or injured, the violence seemed to die down, only to flare up again a month later with renewed ferocity. The violence mainly affected Bombay and a few other cities this time, and took a new, very organised form.

The damage that has been done is not transitory. Recent bombings in Bombay and Calcutta have given rise to much unfounded speculation about 'Islamic fundamentalism'. The one thing that is certain is that this can only have worsened the position of ordinary Muslims in India, and ultimately of the working class as a whole. Currently there is the very real danger that in a general election the parties of the communalist far right would come to power.

police, who in December had been so quick to fire on Muslim demonstrators, killing hundreds, watched passively while the looting, burning and killing went on in front of their eyes. Where they did swing into action, their intervention took a bizarre form. Residents, both Hindu and Muslim, complained that when they called the police because their building was threatened by thugs, the police arrived only after the thugs had gone away ... and then proceeded to confiscate whatever the residents had got together for self-defence, and arrest and take away all the able-bodied young Muslim men! Even when the army was called in, they were not given power to act against law-breakers except under the orders of a police officer; on one occasion when they arrested some culprits, the police promptly released them.

While the police have been completely compromised by these events, it is also notable that Chief Minister Sudhakarrao Naik, Defence Minister Sharad Pawar and Home Minister S B Chavan, all of whom were in Bombay during the pogrom, did nothing to halt the violence. The tragic irony of the whole situation was underlined by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's brief visit to the city on 15 January. On the one hand he received a delegation from the BJP (Bharatiya Janatha Party) calling on him to throw out Pakistanis and Bangladeshis illegally resident in Bombay. Every Bombay resident knows there are no such people: the Muslim residents of Bombay are bona fide Indian citizens. But if called upon to provide documentary proof of citizenship, most of them – like the vast majority of Hindu citizens – would be unable to do so, thus

becoming vulnerable to deportation out of their own country! On the other hand, a delegation from the Ekta (Unity) Forum suggested that minorities should be protected – a suggestion which may sound obvious and banal, and yet one which the Prime Minister showed no signs of acting on. The BAI (Bar Association of India) subsequently passed a resolution saying, 'The BAI views with alarm and despair the complete lack of will on the part of those responsible for maintaining law and order to prevent willful killings of innocent people'.

How did this situation arise? Maharashtra, the state which has Bombay as its capital, has a long tradition of militant Hindu chauvinism ('Hindu chauvinism' being defined in this instance as the attempt to turn India into a 'Hindu Rashtra', ie an exclusively Hindu nation). Hedgewar, the founder of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) in 1925 and its leader Golwalkar, were Maharashtrians, as was Savarkar, the founder of the Hindu Mahasabha; to this day, the headquarters of the RSS is in the Maharashtrian town of Nagpur. Golwalkar was arrested and the RSS banned in 1948 after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by one of its members, Godse; but these measures were reversed in the summer of 1949. In late 1951 the RSS formed a parliamentary front, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, which later became the BJP. Their brand of Hinduism was seen as the crucial ideology for combating communism; as K R Malkani, editor of the RSS paper *The Organiser* wrote, 'Communism can be combated and conquered in Hindustan by the Hindus only through Hindutva'.

When the Shiv Sena was formed by Bal Thackeray in 1966, it added an element of regional ethnic supremacism to anti-communist Hindu chauvinism: not just 'Hindu Rashtra', but 'Maharashtra for the Maharashtrians' and 'Mumbai Amcha Ahe' ('Bombay is Ours') – a 'sons of the soil' slogan which boded ill for the non-Maharashtrians who formed 58 per cent of the city's population. (Apparently he didn't stop to consider what would happen to all the Maharashtrians in other parts of the country if a 'sons of the soil' policy were strictly followed!) In fact the first campaign launched by Thackeray was against South Indians, and the general elections of 1967 provided him with a perfect target: the 'crypto-communist' 'lungi-wala' ('lungi-wearer' – ie South Indian) V K Krishna Menon, who stood as an independent to retain a seat he had won in the previous two elections as a Congress nominee. The Shiv Sena succeeded in defeating him, with the support not only of the Jan Sangh but also of the Congress, thus setting a pattern for the future. In the 1958 local elections, Congress abstained from contesting seats in predominantly Maharashtrian areas in order to help Shiv Sena candidates defeat Communist Party rivals – which they did, getting 42 seats and becoming the second largest group in the Town Hall. Subsequently they have moved up to first place, thus gaining control over the city's administration.

A few months after the 1968 local elections, the Shiv Sena set up the BKS (Bharatiya Kamgar Sena, or Indian Workers' Army), its own 'union'. Among its exploits was the killing of a prominent Communist

Party trade union leader, and the burning of the office of the CP-affiliated Girni Kamgar Union (Textile Workers' Union), after which Thackeray announced: 'I am proud of the Shiv Sainiks who fought the Reds'. Summing up BKS ideology, he said, 'I am against strikes and go-slow tactics. The most important thing is production. Management and labour are two wheels, of industry and they must move smoothly. A trade union should work as a lubricant. Actually, there is no need for a trade union if management behaves sensibly'. Not surprisingly, many employers turned to the BKS for help with breaking strikes and smashing militant unions, and reciprocated by funding the Shiv Sena. While the majority of Bombay workers remained justifiably sceptical of its ability to represent their interests as workers, it is undeniable that the aggressive presence of the BKS has divided workforces and weakened the labour movement in a city renowned for its strong unions and industrial militancy.

The campaign against South Indians resulted in major violence in 1969; Thackeray was arrested, but was unrepentant: 'Yes, I am a dictator, why should we have so many rules?' he asked. 'Why should India want democracy? It is a Hitler that is needed in India today.' Understandably, South Indian Hindus have been among those fleeing Bombay in the current bout of ethnic cleansing.

While there has always been an ideological affinity between the Shiv Sena and BJP, they have organisationally moved much closer together in the course of the 'Ram Janmabhoomi' ('Ram's birthplace') campaign, forming electoral alliances and campaigning jointly for a 'Hindu Rashtra'. Jaibhagwan Goyal, president of the North Indian branch of the Shiv Sena, claimed in an interview that Shiv Sainiks had carried out the entire planning for the demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya, trained for it, and led the assault on it. While this may be an exaggeration, it is certainly true that they were central to the operation. On the other hand, BJP-related organisations have participated in the violence in Bombay; for example, an attempt by the Bombay University and College Teachers' Union to screen the award-winning anti-communist film 'Ram ke Naam' ('in the Name of God') was disrupted by the ABVP (Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad), the student front of the RSS; and journalists of the Hindi newspaper *Hamara Mahanagar* who protested against their strong-arm tactics were stabbed and assaulted so brutally by the ABVP that several had to be hospitalised and one nearly died.

Clearly, the issue in Bombay is not antagonism between 'Hindus' and 'Muslims', but an attempt by totalitarian organisations to control the whole life of the city. Many Bombay residents of all communities, proud of its cosmopolitan character and the ability of its diverse communities to live together peacefully and harmoniously, have been horrified and shattered by recent events; they have made attempts to restore peace and provide relief to the surviving victims of the pogrom. But the grim truth is that they are simply not equipped to deal with the armed, organised violence of the Shiv Sena. The situation in Bombay is that those who have the will to restore peace lack the power to do so. As long as this situation lasts, Bombay will remain in the grip of a lumpen fascist reign of terror.

Anjali Gupta

* 'Communal', 'communalism' etc, in the context of India, mean strife between ethnic/religious groups. 'Communal politics' is basically analogous to racist politics.